SENATE

Tuesday, December 03, 2013

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. The Hon. Vasant Bharath, Sen. The Hon. Fazal Karim, Sen. Elton Prescott SC and Sen. David Small who are all out of the country.

SENATORS' APPOINTMENT

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from His Excellency the President, Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona SC, O.R.T.T.:

"THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

/s/ Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona O.R.T.T., S.C.
President.

TO: ARCHBISHOP BARBARA BURKE

WHEREAS Senator Fazal Karim 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, BARBARA BURKE, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 3rd December, 2013 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Fazal Karim.

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 2nd day of December, 2013."

"THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

/s/ Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona O.R.T.T., S.C.
President.

TO: MR. WAYNE DANIEL STURGE

WHEREAS Senator the Honourable Vasant Vivekanand Bharath 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, WAYNE DANIEL STURGE, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 3rd December, 2013 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Vasant Vivekanand Bharath.

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 2nd day of December, 2013."

"THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

/s/ Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona O.R.T.T., S.C.
President.

TO: DR. AYSHA B. EDWARDS

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)(c) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago,

do hereby appoint you, AYSHA B. EDWARDS, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 3rd December, 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 2nd day of December, 2013."

"THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

/s/ Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona O.R.T.T., S.C.
President.

TO: DR. KRIYAAN SINGH

WHEREAS Senator David Small 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)(c) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, KRIYAAN SINGH, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 3rd December, 2013 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator David Small.

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 2nd day of December, 2013."

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

The following Senators took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law:

Archbishop Barbara Burke, Wayne Daniel Sturge, Dr. Aysha B. Edwards and Dr. Kriyaan Singh.

PAPERS LAID

1. Annual Report of the Police Service Commission for the period January 01, 2013 to December 31, 2013 [*The Vice President (Sen. James Lambert)*]
2. Annual Administrative Report of the Ministry of Justice for the period June 2010 to September 2011. [*The Minister of Justice (Sen. The Hon. Emmanuel George)*]
3. Annual Administrative Report of the Ministry of the People and Social Development for the fiscal year 2009 to 2010. [*The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh)*]
4. Annual Administrative Report of the Ministry of the People and Social Development for the fiscal year 2010 to 2011. [*Sen. The Hon. G. Singh*]
5. Annual Administrative Report of the Trinidad and Tobago Free Zones Company Limited (TTFZ) for the year ended December 31, 2012 [*Sen. The Hon. G. Singh*]
6. Administrative Report of the Ministry of the Attorney General for the fiscal period 2009/2010 [*The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Anand Ramlogan SC)*]
7. Annual Administrative Report of the National Insurance Appeals Tribunal for the financial year October 01, 2011 to September 30, 2012. [*The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai)*]
8. Annual Administrative Report of the Community Improvement Services Limited (CISL) for the year 2009/2010. [*The Minister of Local Government (Sen. The Hon. Marlene Coudray)*]
9. Annual Administrative Report of the Community Improvement Services Limited (CISL) for the year 2010/2011. [*Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray*]
10. Annual Administrative Report of the Community Improvement Services Limited (CISL) for the year 2011/2012. [*Sen. The Hon. M. Coudray*]
11. Annual Administrative Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the period 2007/2008 [*Sen. The Hon. G. Singh*]
12. Annual Administrative Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the period 2008/2009. [*Sen. The Hon. G. Singh*]
13. Annual Administrative Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the period 2010. [*Sen. The Hon. G. Singh*]
14. Annual Administrative Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the period 2011. [*Sen. The Hon. G. Singh*]
15. Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Ombudsman for the period January 2012 to December 2012. [*Sen. J. Lambert*]

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Mr. President: Leader of Government Business.

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Mr. President, the Government will answer the following questions. For Oral Answer questions no. 6, 9, 14, 15, 31, and for written answer questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 38 by Sen. Penny Beckles [*Crosstalk*] 38 and 30—and I am reminded 30 also. So, Mr. President, just to go through those for written answer, which will be circulated, 1, 2, 3, 4, 30 and 38.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Agricultural Development Bank
(Details of Persons Employed)

1. **Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds** asked the hon. Minister of Food Production:

   A. Would the Minister kindly indicate the number of persons who were employed by the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) during the period 1st July, 2010 to present?

   B Would the Minister indicate the names, highest academic or vocational qualification, experience, positions held, dates of their respective engagements/appointments and the salary/emoluments of each employee engaged/appointed by the ABD during the said period?

Agricultural Development Bank
(Vehicles utilized by the ADB)

2. **Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds** asked the hon. Minister of Food Production:

   A Would the Minister provide a list of the motor vehicles in the service of the staff of the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) and the registration numbers in each case?

   B Would the Minister further indicate whether these vehicles are owned by the ADB or leased?

   C If leased, would the Minister indicate who is/are the lessor(s), the monthly rent in each case, and whether it is the intention of the Bank to acquire these vehicles at the end of the lease period, if the lease agreements provide for the lessee's acquisition;

   D If such vehicles are leased, would the Minister indicate the total sum paid to each lessor for the period 1st July, 2010 to the present date?

Agricultural Development Bank
(Details of Assets)

3. **Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds** asked the hon. Minister of Food Production:

With respect to the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB), would the Minister inform the Senate of the following:

(a) the value of the total assets of the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB);
(b) whether all of its assets are insured;
(c) if the answer to (B) is negative, would the Minister say why not;
(d) would the Minister indicate who is/are the broker(s)/insurer(s) of the assets which are insured;
(e) how long has this broker/insurer provided this service and what is the cost of this service to the ADB to date; and
(f) what is the anticipated annual cost?

Agricultural Development Bank
(Details of Security Service)

4. **Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds** asked the hon. Minister of Food Production:

Would the Minister provide this Senate with a copy of the contract(s) of all the providers of security services to the ADB for the past five years?

Capital Offence Cases
(Status of)

30. **Sen. Pennelope Beckles** asked the hon. Attorney General:

Could the Attorney General indicate the status of each capital offence case which is on appeal before the Court for the period 2010 to present?

Agricultural Development Bank
(Details of Road Repairs)

38. **Sen. Pennelope Beckles** asked the hon. Minister of Food Production:

Could the Minister provide the Senate with the following:

(i) a list of all agricultural access roads which were rehabilitated/repaired for the period June 2010 to October 31, 2013 and the distance (in kilometers);

(ii) the cost to repair the said roads; and

(iii) the contractors awarded the abovementioned contracts and the value of same?

Vide end of sitting for written answers.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

Construction of the Siparia Market
(Details of)

10. With respect to the construction of the new Siparia Market undertaken by the Siparia Regional Corporation, would the Minister of Local Government:

(a) indicate the process that was adopted for the issue of the contract to rebuild the said Market;

(b) describe the facility as now exists, demonstrating its components, features and access for the disabled community;

(c) indicate who was the Project Manager and indicate his/her training, qualification and experience for this undertaking;

(d) provide the names of the persons who comprised the evaluation team to evaluate the bid for this contract; when did this team finalize their evaluation; what was the "builder's estimate" for this contract and what was the Corporation's estimate of this builder's proposal and design; and

(e) state the number of vendors that are now or intended to be accommodated in the facility? [*Sen. F. Hinds*]

"Landate" Affair
(Details of)

12. A. Would the Minister indicate to the Senate, the exact status of the investigation into the so-called "Landate" Affair, purportedly involving the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West;

B. Is/are any other agency(ies) of the State conducting this/these investigation(s)?

C. When are these investigations expected to be concluded?

D. Based on the current status of these investigations, are criminal charges a probable result?

E. Is the Minister aware that a report from a Commission of Enquiry into this matter was laid in the House of Representatives? [*Sen. F. Hinds*]

Road Improvement Fund
(Details of Moneys Collected)

35. Could the hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure inform this Senate on:

(i) the amount of moneys collected under the Road Improvement Fund for the period June 2010 to October 31, 2013; and

(ii) the use that has been made by the Ministry of the said funds? [*Sen. P. Beckles*]

Questions by leave, deferred.

1.45 p.m.

Mr. President: Sen. Hinds.

Fire Service Vehicle
(Details of Retrieval)

6. Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds asked the hon. Minister of National Security:

A. Would the Minister indicate/confirm whether a Fire Service vehicle slipped off the roadway at Blanchisseuse and had to be retrieved from a precipice on 17th November, 2012?

B. If the answer to (A) is in the affirmative, would the Minister outline the procurement process for the award of the contract for its retrieval?

C. Would the Minister indicate the exact cost of the retrieval, and what action was taken, if any, to minimize the cost to the Fire Service Department/Ministry of National Security?

D. Would the Minister indicate the date on which the vehicle was actually retrieved and the date of Cabinet's approval of such retrieval; which Minister brought the Cabinet Note and whether the Cabinet had before it, other options in respect of its retrieval and disposal?

E. Would the Minister indicate the depth from which this vehicle was retrieved off the roadway from which it slipped; and what equipment was used to retrieve same?

F. Would the Minister indicate whether an investigation and/or a value-for money component was conducted, in respect of the issues around this matter? And if so, what is the status of this investigation?

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Gary Griffith): Mr. President, with regard to question No. 6: on November 17, 2012, a fire service vehicle slipped off the roadway at Blanchisseuse and had to be retrieved from a precipice.

The fire service land search and rescue teams from the Santa Rosa and Chaguanas fire stations responded to the call but were unable to haul the appliance from where it had come to rest since this retrieval required a high level of technical competence.

As a consequence, on said November 17, 2012, the Chief Fire Officer co-opted the services of crane company, that being Sammy's MultiLift Services Limited, a member of the Junior Sammy Group of Companies, to retrieve the equipment. No official procurement procedure was followed. Cabinet agreed to the payment of the sum of $6,850,000.30 VAT inclusive to the contractor, Sammy's MultiLift Services Limited, for the retrieval of the fire tender. The Chief Fire Officer reported that the task of retrieving the equipment took approximately 21 hours and was completed at 2100 hours on November 19, 2012.

The former Minister of National Security, Jack Warner, submitted a formal request to Cabinet for approval to pay the contractor hired to retrieve the said fire tender. Cabinet's approval was subsequently granted on December 13, 2012. Having regard to the fact that the job to retrieve the fire tender had already been assigned, undertaken and completed at the time the Cabinet Note was being considered, alternative arrangements for the retrieval or disposal were not presented. Cabinet was advised that the fire tender was retrieved from a depth of 150 metres off the roadway from which it slipped.

According to the invoice provided by Sammy's MultiLift Services Limited, the equipment used during the recovery process was as follows: one 250 ton crawler cane; one 345 excavator; one 320 excavator; one 18 ton forklift; one tractor truck and 130-ton heavy haul extendable trailer; three tractor truck and 100 ton lowboy trailer; one man basket; four lighting towers; rigging equipment; and 20 wooden crane mats.

Earlier this year, that being 2013, the Central Audit Committee, which falls under the ambit of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, Investment Division, was mandated by the Minister of Finance and the Economy on a request from the Minister of National Security to conduct a review of the tendering, procurement and payment procedures employed by the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service during the period January 2012—June 2013. This review included the contracting of services of Sammy's MultiLift Services Limited by the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service to retrieve the fire tender which slipped off the Blanchisseuse Main Road in November 2012.

Central Audit Committee has completed its review and submitted a report dated August 2013. Follow-up action on the recommendations of the committee is ongoing. It should be noted that the Ministry of National Security has initiated a review of its internal operations to ensure that they are in line with the established rules, regulations and guidelines. Thank you, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Sen. Hinds.

Sen. Hinds: Is the Minister aware that notwithstanding all those items of heavy equipment that he said appeared on the invoice for the service provided, that it was a mere backhoe that pulled the vehicle out of the 20-metre ditch?

Sen. Singh: How he could know that?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. President, I was not actually there at the time. What the question was asked as we relate to—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: What is the backhoe number?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—would I indicate the depth from which the vehicle was retrieved and what equipment was used to retrieve same? It is not so much as one piece of equipment was used but there were other aspects that were required as recommended by Sammy's MultiLift Services Limited. [*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: Further supplemental. Now that the Minister has indicated that he was not there, [*Interruption*] now that the Minister has indicated that he was not there, you have highlighted a whole list of heavy equipment that you say was used and I am asking whether you are aware that those were not employed to retrieve that vehicle, as a fact?

Sen. Singh: "How you know that?" [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. President, again, I said I was not there so I would not know for a fact. [*Interruption*] It is based on the report and the findings based on the investigation, and this is what I have.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Were you there? [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Hinds: Is the Minister saying to this House that Cabinet agreed to pay this—well, having said to us that Cabinet agreed to pay this money, would the Minister tell this honourable House whether any proper investigation to secure value for money for the taxpayers of this country was considered by the Cabinet before paying that money?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. President, that is another question, and the question that was asked, if it is that I get that information, I would pass it on to you.

Hon. Senator: That is right.

Mr. President: You would have to accept his answer, Sen. Hinds. Anything further?

Sen. Hinds: Yes, indeed. Yes, indeed.

Sen. Singh: All that for—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. Hinds: Does the Government now consider or is the Minister saying that the Government and the Cabinet considers that the people of Trinidad and Tobago got value for money in the retrieval of that vehicle at the cost of six point something million dollars?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: No, Mr. President, I would not be able to answer that, especially with the fact that at the time the Minister of National Security was Mr. Jack Warner, and in the words of Shaggy, "It wasn' me".

Sen. Singh: Yes. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: You are seeking the expression of an opinion from the Minister, which he is not required to respond to.

Sen. Hinds: I am obliged.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Further supplemental, Mr. President. Thank you, hon. Minister, for you answers thus far. Hon. Minister, you said that no procurement procedure was followed whereas the question asked specifically, what procurement procedure was followed? Perhaps, the Minister may indicate whether there is, in fact, a procurement procedure for this type of work?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: There is. At that time, however, I could stress that there was no official procurement procedure followed during the retrieval of this said vehicle.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Thank you, hon. Minister. Further supplemental. Hon. Minister, are you able to say insofar as this was a matter procured through the Ministry of National Security, whether the standard rules of procurement for values up to $1 million would therefore have applied?

Hon. Senator: Answer the leader. Answer the leader. [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Explain again?

Sen. Al-Rawi: To clarify, are you able to say insofar as this was a procurement by the Ministry of National Security, whether the standard state operating procedure for Ministries requiring approval of a permanent secretary up to $1 million in expenditure, applied in this instance?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. President, what I could say is that, pertaining to this particular item, there was a request—[*Interruption*] one minute—and what it stated is based on the type of equipment, the Chief Fire Officer advised that

having regard to the position of the fire tender, a high level of technical competence was required to retrieve the equipment. As a consequence, the Chief Fire Officer co-opted the services of crane company Sammy's MultiLift. It should be noted again that no official procurement procedures were observed. What I can assure you is that on my watch, it would be observed.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Relative to procurement procedures specifically, hon. Minister, are you able to assist us with the answer to how many times this matter was submitted to the Cabinet? The matter of payment of this invoice as procured, how many times this was submitted?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: No. Mr. President, I definitely would not be able to. I am a new kid on the block so I will have to—that would be another question and I would be able to answer that at another time.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Sure. Hon. Minister, insofar as I accept that you were not there at the time, but that others including the Attorney General were there, are you able to assist us with whether any reduction in the invoice tendered—in the sum tendered by that invoice was had? Was there a higher invoice first tendered for Cabinet approval and therefore was there a lesser sum after?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. President, that is another question. I can actually get that information for you, but I would not be able to answer that right now. I was just able to make sure that I am able to answer the questions that were brought to the House today.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Hon. Minister, you have indicated to us that insofar as the works were completed, it was therefore consideration of the Cabinet that it should be paid. On what basis, was that, in fact, the position of the Cabinet?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. President, this was based on the fact that this was a fait accompli, it was already done, it came after the facts, [*Interruption*] and the Cabinet approval was given. This was based on the request by the Chief Fire Officer. The job was already done and the bill was already submitted, and the Minister of National Security at the time submitted it to Cabinet for approval upon which Cabinet approval was subsequently granted on December 13, 2012.

Sen. Hinds: Further supplemental. In light of the Minister's admission that no—[*Interruption*]

Mr. President: Senator, you know you cannot embark upon a debate.

Sen. Hinds: Far from.

Mr. President: You may ask a question.

Sen. Hinds: Yes, indeed.

Mr. President: Thank you.

Sen. Hinds: Yes, indeed, Mr. President.

Sen. Singh: [*Inaudible*]—for leader. "He fighting up for leader."

Sen. Hinds: In light of the Minister's admission that no procurement programme was followed, has the Cabinet contemplated sending this matter for the attention of the police or the Integrity Commission?

Sen. Singh: The audit committee.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: No. Mr. President, it went to the central audit committee which falls under the ambit of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, Investment Division, and this was mandated by the Minister of Finance and the Economy on the request from the Minister of National Security to conduct a review of that tendering process.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Further supplemental. Hon. Minister, are you able to tell us whether Cabinet simply accepts all bills put to it for payment because they are fait accompli?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: No, definitely not, Mr. President. That is not what I said. What I said is that the—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: This is a leadership race, boy. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Sen. Hinds: "All yuh laugh." Taxpayers' money—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: This was already completed, it was submitted to Cabinet and Cabinet at that time—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. President: Senators, I need to hear what the Minister is saying.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—had agreed to pay.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Hon. Minister, are you able to assist us as to whether legal advice was sought on the obligation of Government to [*Desk thumping*] actually pay a sum presented to it, as it was done?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: No. Mr. President, I would not be able to. I am dealing specifically with the questions at hand.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Hon. Minister, are you able to assist us as to whether the Attorney General in fact attended at that Cabinet meeting which passed that particular approval?

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Why you did not pose that question to me and let me answer it? Pose that question to me!

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. President, once again, I would not be able to answer that. I was not at the Cabinet at that time so I would not know exactly who was in Cabinet at the time when this was agreed to.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Hon. Minister, are you able to assist us as to whether the Ministry of the Attorney General's A team that it has, in sufficient tow, to investigate matters of high—[*Interruption*]

Mr. President: I could not allow the question. [*Crosstalk*] You will have to take your seat, Sen. Al-Rawi. I will not allow that question. I will not allow the question. You have a supplemental, Sen. Hinds? [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: For clarification, Mr. President, so that I do not infringe your ruling, may I understand what aspect of the question is offensive?

Mr. President: I have exercised my discretion, please have your seat! Sen. Hinds.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Further supplemental.

Mr. President: I ask—Sen. Hinds has a supplemental, I have invited him.

Sen. Hinds: He has another.

Mr. President: You are deferring or you are omitting. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Hinds: No, no, no. Okay, thank you very much, Mr. President. You are very kind; very, very kind and it is appreciated. Is the Minister in light of all that he has told this House, is the Minister prepared to accept that the Cabinet was reckless at best and complicitous at worst [*Crosstalk*] in supporting this transaction?

Mr. President: Sen. Hinds, you are calling for an opinion.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: "That is a statement, man; wha happen to yuh?"

Mr. President: Sen. Al-Rawi.

Sen. Singh: Leadership battle fighting out here.

Hon. Senator: Yes.

Sen. Singh: Al-Rawi and Hinds.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Hon. Minister, insofar as you are now the Minister of National Security in relation to this issue, has there been any recommendation on your part for investigation by the Anti-Corruption Investigation squad? [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. President, there was the Central Audit Committee which falls under the ambit of the Ministry of National Security—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Ministry of Finance and the Economy.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Sorry, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, Investment Division, they are the ones who would be submitting an update on this matter and then we would proceed from there.

2.00 p.m.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Further supplemental. Hon. Minister, thank you. You indicated to us that there was follow-up action ongoing. Could you indicate what that follow-up action is?

Sen. Singh: Premature. "It eh finish yet?"

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: The committee noted that determining whether or not the retrieval of the water tanker was an emergency and it was critical. The Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service in making this determination used the implied rule, that the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service is a 100 per cent mobile unit, and as such it is necessary that its entire fleet be functionally available. The central audit, however, found that this particular decision was not supported by any documented rule.

Sen. Hinds: Final supplemental, Mr. President. Hon. Minister, is the Minister able to indicate or to tell this Senate whether the vehicle, in question, is actually roadworthy and being used as we speak or whether it has been written off as derelict and scrap?

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. President, I will have to confirm that. I really cannot speak, every single week—there is a different establishment dealing with maintenance of vehicles and dealing with—to see what vehicles are on the road, what is roadworthy. So I will have to get back to you very soon.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Further supplemental. Hon. Minister, are you able to provide a time frame by which the Central Audit Committee will be delivering its report on this matter?

Sen. Ramlogan SC: "Tell him yuh have to check on that nah."

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: No, Mr. President, I cannot give that answer at this time.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Hon. Minister, are you able to assist us with the time frame by which the review on the tender procedures is expected to come before FNGP or even the Cabinet? [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: No, Mr. President, I am unable to answer it at this time.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Hon. Minister, are you able to assist us with whether that review is to come to you then in your own Ministry, that is procurement procedures in relation to Ministry of National Security? [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: Mr. President, I cannot confirm this.

Mr. President: Sen. Hinds, oh sorry, you have a question, Sen. Henry? [*Laughter*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: "Oy yo yoi." I cannot believe that.

Sen. Dr. Henry: Would the hon. Minister indicate whether anyone attempted to ascertain the salvage value of the equipment before the decision was made?

Sen. Singh: The decision was made by the Chief Fire Officer.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Good question, boy.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: The Chief Fire Officer at the time, he decided that the vehicle required retrieving, and it took 21 hours, but there was nothing stating whether it is that you looked at cost benefits analysis to verify whether it is, it should be written off.

Sen. Hinds: Somebody should be jailed.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: You want to jail the fire service.

Mr. President: Sen. Hinds.

Sen. Hinds: Thank you.

Ministry of Education/PSIP Allocation
(School and Early Childhood Care Centre)

9. Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds asked the hon. Minister of Education:

A. Would the hon. Minister say whether since May 2010, the Cabinet approved any bond(s) to raise money to supplement his Ministry's PSIP allocation for school and Early Childhood Care Centre building construction?

B. If the answer to (A) is affirmative, would the Minister say in what sum(s); when was this/these sum(s) made accessible to his ministry and whether this/these sum(s) has/have all been utilized?

C. Would the Minister further indicate whether his Ministry's total PSIP allocation since May 2010, was also fully utilized and in particular, whether the PSIP allocation was fully utilized in the same year(s) that the bond-issued supplementary funds became accessible for expenditure?

D. How many such new centres were constructed as a consequence of the availability of these supplementary allocation(s) along with the Ministry's PSIP allocation and at what cost?

Sen. Hinds: Cabinet should be jailed.

The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Tim Gopeesingh): Mr. President, I have the honour to answer the questions raised by the Senator. [*Crosstalk*] The answer to the first part of the question, A: the Cabinet since May 2010, has not approved any bond or bonds to raise money to supplement the Ministry of Education's public sector investment programme allocation for school and Early Childhood Care and Education building construction. However, the information I want to provide to you will relate to section (B) of the question. An information memo was issued by Central Bank on October 22, 2009 for a bond issue of TT $400 million; that is in 2009. A trust deed was executed on October 30, 2009, eight days later.

On September 20, 2011, the issue of the bond went to bondholders for change of use, not only for construction of Early Childhood Education Centres, but to current new construction programmes, including primary, secondary schools and Early Childhood Education Centres.

Answer to section C of the question: In 2010, $484,584,000 approximately was utilized out of the allocated $585,910,000, which is approximately 83 per cent of the PSIP allocation utilized in 2010. In 2011, approximately 91 per cent of the PSIP was utilized, indicating that $600,657,000 out of the $657,230,000 was utilized. In 2012, approximately 90 per cent of the PSIP was utilized, but $484,210,000 out of the $540,021,000.

Mr. President, it is indeed a great honour for me to inform this honourable Senate, in relation to section D of the question: We have been able to construct as a Government 34 new Early Childhood Education Centres. [*Desk thumping*] Another 20 will be completed by December of this year. [*Desk thumping*] So by December 2013, we would have completed 54 Early Childhood Education Centres. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: How much they do?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. President, we inherited massive debt owed to contractors—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senators: "Ahhh".

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Owed to Haji Contractors—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: He take the money and run.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—and where the Haji Contracting firm from Korea—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Call for them to get lock up.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—went abroad with TT $60 million.

Sen. Maharaj: "I aint hear him calling for them to get lock up."

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: We had to work with the contractors who had done substantial amount of work in some of these schools, and in fact, out of the 22 centres that Haji had started, they basically had done about 10 per cent in about three of these schools and less than 10 per cent in a few others and none in others. But they were able to get away from the last administration by taking $60 million out of the country without any accounting back to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Maharaj: Who was the Minister then?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. President, we also constructed 15 primary schools—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Hazel Manning.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—we have completed the construction of 15 primary schools during these three years and six months; and 17 more are under construction. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: We deliver, you talk.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. President, we have completed five secondary schools, and nine are under construction. It is important for me to indicate that as a Government coming to office in May 2010, we met a school construction programme that, for secondary schools the cost for each one of these was close to $200 million. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Wow. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: We had the design consultants for 10 of these schools which they wanted to start was the same individual for design consultant.

Hon. Senator: Who was that, boy?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Arial.

Hon. Senator: Who is Arial?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: It was the same design consultant who was the supervising consultant for all the 10 secondary schools that they wanted to start—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: "Ha", corruption.

Sen. Maharaj: That is PNM racket.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And it was the same design consultant and supervising consultant who ensured that in the construction of these secondary schools they would put in a central air conditioning, Mr. President—imagine in a tropical country a central air conditioning utilizing natural gas and a heavy flow of water.

Mr. President, they arranged for one consultant to be able to procure the HVAC systems or the chilled beam system for all schools.

Hon. Senator: Wow.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: So the same design consultant, the same supervising consultant making sure that they pick one person to do the HVAC system or the chilled beam system for these secondary schools at a phenomenal cost of $13 million—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Oh my God!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—for one HVAC chilled beam system, $13 million for an air conditioning system for a school.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Shame!

Sen. Ramnarine: And NGC has to pay to run pipeline.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. President, when we took over there was no ability to change any of that in any direction. We had to go along with that. At three schools today, the Marabella, the Aranguez and the Couva School, we are

experiencing tremendous difficulties because of the system that they had decided to put in; we were unable to change it back. The other schools now we are changing, to a multiple-split or a VRF system.

So, Mr. President, we had to deal with expenditure for these schools of nearly $200 million and close to about $400 million were owed to contractors when we took over at EFCL during our term of office. And the Senator obviously knows, because this was related to him when EFCL came under the scrutiny of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee and this was related to the Senator. So, Mr. President—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Maharaj: He "doh" want to know about that thing.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh:—we also met some construction of a few primary schools at a cost of more than $40 million each. This is what we had to inherit and deal with it at a fast pace during our first year in office. During that time also, Mr. President, we did 2,200 projects in early childhood education, primary and secondary schools at a cost of close to $500 million for repairs and maintenance, utilizing over 550 small, medium and large contactors. During this vacation period, the summer vacation period, we did projects on 227 schools. Such was the dilapidation that the last administration of the PNM, under 2001—2010, left a legacy of massive dilapidation of the school infrastructure, and we inherited that—over 100 schools are more than 100 years of age and more than 200 schools more than 50 years of age. During their time they constructed 22 Early Childhood Education Centres in nine years—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Maharaj: Nine years.

Hon. Senator: Nine years.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: In three years we have already completed 54. [*Desk thumping*] During their time they constructed five primary schools, in three years and six months we have completed 14 already and another 17 will be completed before the end of this year. [*Desk thumping*] It is our intention to complete the other eight secondary schools, plus a number of science and administrative blocks in a number of other secondary schools. We have also earmarked another 25 Early Childhood Education Centres on the drawing board to hopefully start construction from early January.

Thank you, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Sen. Hinds.

Sen. Hinds: Notwithstanding the gross irrelevance on the part to the Minister—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senators: "Nah, nah."

Sen. Hinds:—a supplemental question, a supplemental question. [*Crosstalk*] Is the Minister able to indicate to this Senate today, whether all the contractors that were to be paid on your acquisition of that office, have they now been paid, all of them?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. President, that forms the basis of another question which I will—[*Interruption* and *desk thumping*]

Sen. Hinds: Another question.

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: I will get the answer for you.

Sen. Hinds: He answered 50 different questions, he "doh" want to answer this one. Further supplemental, how then in light of—Mr. President—in light of the answers that the Minister—[*Crosstalk and laughter*]

Mr. President: Senator, continue the question.

Sen. Hinds: In light of the answers that the Minister proffered here this afternoon, how then does the Minister explain that several schools across the nation were unable to be opened and to function efficiently at the end of the summer vacation—you spoke to that, answer that?

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Let me correct what has been happening in the general public, Mr. President. We undertook 227 projects. At first when we closed for the vacation period there were 83 projects on the drawing board. And during the period of the vacation principals began to give us more and more information, they wanted their schools completed. And when the primary schools are opened at a particular time, the principals of these primary schools come out on a Thursday before school opening on a Monday, and therefore requests were made as late as the Thursday before school opening on the Monday. So we moved from 83 projects to 227 projects.

2.15 p.m.

Mr. President, some of these projects included major electrical repairs to 21 secondary schools at a value of close to about $800,000 or $900,000 for major electrical upgrade of these secondary schools.

So, in fact, we did complete close to 98 per cent of the repairs and maintenance that we had for secondary schools, requested by principals, but some requesting later, so that at the end of it, some had to remain closed. But, in fact,

the schools that are giving difficulty and have to be remained closed from time to time is as a result of their HVAC and the chiller beam system which they wanted to put in, at a cost of $30 million.

We are still having major difficulties with it because the whole electronics is not working well; it is the wrong system that they put in and somebody has to be accountable for that, Mr. President.

Sen. Hinds: A further—

Mr. President: Senator, it is now 2.15, which is the end of question time, unless this Senate wishes [*Crosstalk*] to continue with the question period. Is it the wish of this House that we continue on the question period?

Hon. Senator: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Hon. Senator: "Is their last hoorah."

Mr. President: Supplemental, Senator. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Hinds: Mr. President, I am being distracted.

Hon. Senator: Allow him his last question.

[*Sen. Hinds stands*]

Sen. Singh: No, no, no, no.

Mr. President: Please have your seat. [*To Sen. Hinds*]

Hon. Senator: Allow him his last question.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: "Why yuh so unparliamentary and rude!"

Sen. Singh: Mr. President—

Sen. Ramlogan SC: "Dey would sacrifice yuh fer de Indian vote, yuh know." Behave!

Sen. Hinds: I have no Range Rover.

Mr. President: Senators, can we listen to—

Sen. Singh: Mr. President, I will indulge my colleague, Sen. Hinds, in his last hoorah.

Sen. Coudray: His farewell. [*Desk thumping*] It is a farewell question.

Sen. Hinds: I am very, very grateful, and I am very grateful to you, Range Rovers notwithstanding.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: That is all right.

Sen. Hinds: Mr. President, supplemental. The Minister will agree—would the Minister agree that tossing out figures of expenditure does not give a true picture of value for money? And the Minister had promised an investigation into corruption at the EFCL. Could the Minister say what has become of your investigation that you promised this Parliament?

Sen. Singh: Next question!

Hon. Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Mr. President, it forms the basis of another question. I will be prepared to answer the question when it arises. [*Desk thumping*]

[*Sen. Al-Rawi stands*]

Mr. President: I am not sure if the Senate is acceding to your request, Sen. Al-Rawi.

Sen. Hinds: Yes, it is.

Sen. Al-Rawi: You want to put the question, Mr. President?

Sen. Hinds: Yes, indeed.

Mr. President: I certainly will have to be guided by this Senate as to whether the question-time period, which is now two minutes past its hour—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: He will not be here, but you will be here.

Sen. Singh: Mr. President, we have been very accommodating throughout the whole period, answering questions and a multiplicity of supplemental questions, which we have engaged. However, the Government has business to conduct.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Yeah, yeah, yeah. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: The next order of business.

Hon. Senator: Al-Rawi will be here; "de odders won't be here".

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Yes, and will be joined by Ras Nancoo Singh. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President: Yes, Madam Clerk.

Sen. Beckles: Mr. President, could I make an enquiry? Sorry.

Mr. President: Sorry, Sen. Beckles.

Sen. Beckles: Since there are a few questions that were available, is it possible for those to be circulated, or are they—[*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Singh: Mr. President, as I have indicated, we are in a position to answer several questions orally, and in light of the fact that we have gone beyond question time we would circulate those that the time did not allow for oral answer. In fact, the current leader of the Senate—the Opposition—had a question dealing with the whole question of the number of requests for certificates of environmental clearance, and which would have provided a very lengthy response because there were some 1,165 requests of certificates of environmental clearance. But I will ensure that it is circulated, Mr. President.

Sen. Beckles: Thank you, kindly, to the Leader of Government Business.

Environmental Management Agency
(Details of Certificates of Environmental Clearance)

31. Sen. Pennelope Beckles asked the hon. Minister of the Environment and Water Resources:

Could the hon. Minister indicate:

(i) the number of requests made between June 2010 to October 31, 2013 for Certificates of Environmental Clearance to the Environmental Management Agency;

(ii) the number of requests which were approved, denied and/or pending; and

(iii) the organisations, companies, entities and/or NGOs which applied for a Certificate of Environmental Clearance.?

Answer lodged in the Parliament Library.

Sen. Hinds: Every time I show the Attorney General this he gets jumpy.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: But you have all the time to read. [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

Sen. Singh: The other questions, Mr. President, would be deferred for a two-week period.

Sen. Hinds: "When ah show him dis book he always jumpy. What, yuh afraid of dis book?" [*Crosstalk*]

EXPIRATION OF SPEAKING TIME

The following questions stood on the Order Paper:

Teenage Pregnancies in Trinidad and Tobago

14. (a) Could the hon. Minister of Health provide the figures for the number of teenagers in Trinidad and Tobago who gave birth, for each of the years, from 2008 to 2012?

(b) Could the Minister give a breakdown of these figures in the age groups 12 years and under, 13 years to 16 years and 17 years to 19 years?

(c) Could the Minister say what is being done by his Minsitry to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies? [*Sen. Dr. V. Wheeler*]

Ministry of Education
(Sex Education in Schools)

15. A. Could the hon. Minister of Education say if the Ministry of Education has a policy on Sex Education in the nation's schools?

B. If the answer to part (A) is in the affirmative could the Minister say what that policy is? [*Sen. Dr. V. Wheeler*]

Road Improvement Fund
(Details of Moneys Collected)

35. Could the Minister of Works and Infrastructure inform this Senate on:

(i) the amount of moneys collected under the Road Improvement Fund of the period June 2010 to October 31, 2013; and

(ii) the use that has been made by the Ministry of the said funds? [*Sen. P. Beckles*]

Question time having expired, questions 14, 15 and 35 were not dealt with.

Mr. President: Senators, can we listen in silence? Leader of Government Business?

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Mr. President, we would deal with the Tobacco Regulations Motion on another occasion. We will deal with Motions (ii), (iii) and (iv) on the Order Paper.

EXCISE DUTY (COMPRESSED NATURAL GAS) ORDER, 2013

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai): [*Desk thumping*] Mr. President, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

Whereas it is provided by section 13(2) of the Excise (General Provisions) Act, Chap. 78:50 that the Minister may by order impose any new excise duty or increase any excise duty and from the date of publication of the Order in the Gazette and until the expiry thereof the duties specified in the Order shall be payable in lieu of the duties payable prior thereto;

And Whereas it is provided by the said subsection, that every Order issued under that subsection shall, after four days and within twenty-one days from the date of its first publication, be submitted to the Senate and the House of Representatives and the Senate and the House of Representatives may by Resolution confirm, amend or revoke such Order, and upon publication of the Resolution of the Senate and the House of Representatives in the Gazette, the Resolution shall have effect and the Order shall then expire;

And Whereas the Excise Duty (Compressed Natural Gas) Order, 2013 was made under section 13(2) of the Excise (General Provisions) Act, and first published in the Gazette on the 8th day of October 2013;

And Whereas it is expedient to confirm the said Order;

Be it Resolved that the Excise Duty (Compressed Natural Gas) Order, 2013 be confirmed.

Mr. President, the Order provides for the full reduction in the excise from five cents to zero cents. In other words, we will not have an excise imposed on this particular gas which is sold by retail to owners of vehicles which use compressed natural gas.

The context for this adjustment has to do with Government's overall strategy with respect to moving away from the fuel subsidy over time. The Government, in reducing the retail price of CNG from $1.07 to one dollar per litre of gasoline equivalent or LGE, is seeking to set the stage, as part of the overall programme that we have implemented, for the more widespread adoption of CNG in motor vehicles. At the same time, we will seek to rationalize the price of CNG for retail purposes, ex-NGC, as well as the redistribution of the margins among the dealers, the owners of the CNG station equipment and NGC for natural gas distribution infrastructure.

The adjustment of this margin is just one of the measures which we propose to implement for the acceleration and development of CNG as a major vehicular fuel in Trinidad and Tobago. I expect that the effect of the cost of this reduction will be in the region of about TT $300,000 per annum on Government's revenues.

In the 2011 budget, which was read in this honourable Senate, the Government had stated its intention to accelerate the CNG programme, and the purpose of this is really threefold: first, to reduce the carbon footprint of the country. As you know, Trinidad and Tobago, on a per capita basis, is one of the largest emitters of CO_2 per capita in the world, and this has to do with the fact that we have a very burgeoning energy industry, an energy industry where we are positioned as the number one exporters of methanol and ammonia in the world, and is also a very significant exporter of LNG.

Secondly, by adopting the strategy of moving to CNG for vehicles, the intention is to increase foreign exchange earnings of the country, because what we would be doing is that the gasoline which is normally consumed here, will now be exported, and we expect that by the time the entire—what we call phase one and phase two—conversion to CNG has taken place that we will increase our export revenues from liquid gasoline, which will now be exported by Petrotrin, to about $2.5 billion in savings or in new exports over the first five years of this programme. And, of course, Mr. President, as you know, the fuel subsidy is in the region of about $4 billion a year, and the intention is that we will move away from liquid fuel as a major source of energy in motor vehicles.

In fact, Mr. President, this initiative is not one that is new, but actually goes back several years. In fact, if I could quote from the *Hansard* when last this matter came up in 2008—the *Hansard* of November 07, 2008. At the time the then Minister of Finance, Mrs.Karen Nunez-Tesheira, had indicated that:

> The Government is in the process of expanding the distribution of compressed natural gas as we move to a cheaper, economically efficient and environmentally friendly fuel system.

So this is an initiative which has crossed administrations and continues, as we go forward in the future. We do not expect it to cross any other administration, as the expectation is the Government will continue over the next five years or so. [*Desk thumping*] So the thing is that the Government had also indicated—Mrs. Nunez-Tesheira—that:

> The Government will put measures in place to increase the number of service stations and geographic distribution of these stations offering CNG. This will be achieved over the next two years and begin a progressive move to reduce the fuel subsidy.

So, in fact, Mr. President, the initiative to expand the number of gas stations that offer CNG is an initiative that started some time ago. I must say, however, that we do have a very credible programme in place which we have developed and which is being led by the NGC and we have already established a subsidiary company within the NGC group which will be responsible for the distribution of this CNG to gas stations throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

In fact, some of us, in going east along the—in the area of Sea Lots—would have seen work being carried out there by NGC and that is the very first phase of providing—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Two weeks ago.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: It started two weeks ago, I am told—of providing the natural gas to the PTSC compound which will be the first CNG station as part of this particular initiative. We will have first a temporary filling depot with a compressor and a couple of dispensers which we will have in place by January of next year, and then we will have a full-blown station by approximately September of next year, according to the plan. So that overall, we expect this initiative to start gathering some momentum.

Sometime ago the Government had established a CNG task force which had developed a five-year plan, which provides for the conversion of 100,000 vehicles, and this 100,000 vehicles would represent approximately 15 per cent of the total vehicle population in Trinidad and Tobago. Now it is not that we are targeting to only convert 100,000, but we have worked our economics on the basis that there will only be a 15 per cent conversion, and using that 15 per cent conversion, we expect a payback that would eventually increase to at least a 15 per cent rate of return, and I will come back to some of those numbers subsequently.

But, basically, the plan that we have developed, in terms of the payback and in terms of the financial metrics that would be in the plan, was based on a relatively conservative number of only approximately 15 per cent of drivers converting to CNG. Our intention, though, is to see that number rise much more significantly than that. So currently, there are about 700,000 vehicles in Trinidad and Tobago and the financials were worked on the basis of 100,000 vehicles.

We also are looking at the establishment of 72 CNG stations. This will comprise a combination of new stations, as well as of stations which—existing stations which will be converted and retrofitted to facilitate the provision of CNG and the filling of vehicles via CNG. So that in phase one we are looking at a total of about 17,500 vehicles and a total of 22 new CNG stations. That will cost us approximately $500 million and we expect that phase to take us two years.

2.30 p.m.

The phase two will be the other 82,500 vehicles, and the buildout and the retrofitting of the remaining stations to get us up to an additional 50 CNG stations. The cost of the conversions—because we intend to subsidize to greater and lesser extent different types of vehicles for the conversion to facilitate the achievement of the objectives that we have, we expect that the overall cost of that entire programme would be about $1.5 billion.

So over the next two years, Mr. Speaker—Mr. President—we expect to see a gradual buildout of stations, a gradual conversion of vehicles, and we expect to move from approximately 4,000 vehicles now which use CNG to approximately 17,000 vehicles, and this would be what we refer to as phase one.

A big part of phase one too, Mr. President, is the conversion and the buildout of CNG among the bus fleet in Trinidad and Tobago. We are in the process of acquiring 100 new CNG ready buses and we are looking at the process and the modalities involved in converting the other 300 buses that PTSC has.

So, as I said, we expect to have a full-blown station on the PTSC compound by September of next year and, eventually, we are looking for that station, at City Gate, to also accommodate the maxi-taxis which will be coming into City Gate. So that over time, we expect that there will be a significant conversion of that particular fleet and, therefore, in that way we can minimize the impact of a withdrawal of the fuel subsidy on the fares, of the taxi fares and the bus fares which individuals have to pay.

We expect that the cost of that particular station at PTSC compound will cost about $23 million, and we expect to save about $18,000 per bus per annum as the buses are converted from diesel to CNG. In fact, in making the price of CNG now $1—in fact, it is very competitive for a taxi to change from gasoline, from diesel to CNG, because you would be moving from $1.50 a litre to $1 a litre for CNG. So not only will it be easier to maintain the vehicle because it does not clog up your system in the same way that the liquid fuel does, diesel does—it is a cleaner burning and so on—but you will also have the effect of the lower cost per litre of gasoline equivalent in the vehicles and, therefore, there is a built-in incentive now for individuals to move to CNG. I should not say built-in incentive now because the price is actually lower now, but we are actually moving it to a price in terms of marketing, and in terms of selling the idea and so on, a dollar a litre. It is an easy way to communicate and for people to understand the effects on their overall economics, particularly for taxi drivers and so on.

So, we expect that when the full conversion of the PTSC fleet is completed, that the savings for PTSC will be about $77 million a year, which will go a considerable way to us reducing actually the transfers and subsidies that one has to pay to PTSC in a direct way. So we expect to see, therefore, a significant financial benefit as a result of making this changeover.

As I had indicated, we have done a financial analysis and the potential savings for the Government at the end of phase one will be approximately $321 million. So it will more than offset the $300,000 that it is costing us in terms of the reduction that we are making here right now and cumulatively over the five-year period to save us about $3.45 billion. And from year five going forward, we expect an annual savings of about $1.675 billion per annum by way of the effect of making this particular change.

So, we think that the economics makes a lot of sense for us and it is something that we would like to encourage. In doing this, of course, and in moving to a cleaner burning fuel, there is the whole issue of well, what about things like hybrid vehicles, electric vehicles and so on? These vehicles, of course, are much more costly, but the Government is also looking at the whole question of how do we deal with the fiscal incentives that would encourage, given the price of these vehicles, the take-up of some of these vehicles locally. But for us, the issue is not the increase in the number of vehicles at the margin. What we have to deal with is the fact that we have 700,000 vehicles today.

So it is a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, perhaps new vehicles, an incentive could be given to make those vehicles much more energy efficient and much more environmentally friendly. But at the same time, we have a legacy of approximately 700,000 vehicles here in Trinidad and Tobago which we need to address by way of a conversion of these vehicles and making these vehicles much more efficient and much more environmentally friendly.

So, Mr. President, the focus here will be to continue that overall strategy that the Government has started to roll-out, that we have started with this particular company that we have established which has as its responsibility, the rolling out of this particular initiative and the buildout of these particular gas stations. The gas for this particular initiative, we will take from our allocation of royalty gas. So, right now the Government receives—part of the gas that it has as royalty gas is valued at approximately TT $30 million—the 4.7 billion cubic feet that will be required on an annual basis to support this particular initiative. So the cost of that will be valued at $30 billion, but, of course, the cost to the Government is zero.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Million or billion?

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Billion. Sorry, sorry. What I said? Thirty million dollars.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Million.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Million, yes. My apologies. Four point seven billion cubic feet valued at $30 million for the year, but the cost will be a zero cost for the Government. But I make reference to the $30 million because it is an opportunity cost for us. It is a cost that we will incur because of the fact that we are not going to use that gas to be sold for other products and services which can be produced such as methanol, LNG and so on.

So we expect, Mr. President, that we will have a roll-out of phase one starting now, from the end of January. So early February of next year, we will have the first phase of the connections for CNG. For the first phase of buses which are

expected in Trinidad and Tobago by the end of January next year, that those vehicles, there is an initial of 35 of the 100 will be here at the end of January next year and those buses we will start to fill them out with CNG.

Of course, Mr. President, there are a number of issues related to CNG that need to be addressed, one of which, of course, is the tank. Sometimes to retrofit some of these vehicles, the tank goes in the trunk and it certainly reduces the amount of space that you have available. But there is new technology which allows some of these tanks to be placed under the vehicle itself rather than in the trunk, and that will be an option that will be available. One of the things that we have to recognize though, is that over time we expect that—the United States itself, because of the shale gas phenomena, is likely to begin investing very significantly in CNG for vehicles and, therefore, we expect some of the technology for the storage of CNG to be dealt with over the coming years, as the shale gas phenomena takes root in the United States.

So I expect that that would be one of the potential drawbacks. Not so much sometimes for the maxi-taxis and even some of the route taxis, because sometimes some of the route taxis do not use a lot of trunk space other than when you are dealing with taking things to market and, therefore, we think that it can be effected without a very significant dislocation for individuals.

Another issue which has come up, of course, is the whole question of the safety of these particular devices and, in fact, you know, there have been a number of pieces of research which show that compressed natural gas in the tank is actually, in fact, much safer. And if I go back to the *Hansard*, again, where some of the experience was shared with us, it shows that the *Hansard* of Friday, November 07, 2008 and the contribution by the hon. Colm Imbert:

> "…compressed natural gas…is much safer than other fuels in the event of a spill."—and I can use—because it is correct.

If you do the research, you will see that what he was saying was, in fact, correct.

> "…natural gas is lighter than air, and therefore it disperses quickly when it is released, unlike gasoline. If you have a puncture in a gasoline tank it will flow and go all over the ground; if somebody throws a match you will have an explosion,…"—and so on.

But the thing is, that without going into the details there, the fact of the matter is that CNG is itself a fairly safe fuel, and in some instances, much safer than the liquid fuels that we have grown accustomed to.

So, the issue for us though has been the whole issue of getting the stations built out and getting the more widespread adoption of CNG, and this particular initiative that we have started of which this change in the price is a part of that overall initiative, is intended to help increase the level of awareness of this particular alternative and to gradually begin to ramp up.

We think once we get to the stage where we have moved the PTSC buses and some of the maxi-taxis to CNG, that we will also simultaneously begin a programme of converting Government offices to CNG. So that overall the achievement of the 17,000 vehicles within the first two years of the programme, we expect that that particular target should be relatively easily achieved if we were to take into account police vehicles, Government vehicles, buses, some of the maxi-taxis and so on, as well as the awareness programme that will be built around this particular initiative. So we are seeing, you know, we think we are on the right track, we think we are getting to where we want to be as far as this particular initiative is concerned.

Another aspect of this change, Mr. President, is that we will be rationalizing the price ex-NGC. Right now, the wholesale margins differ between the different wholesalers of CNG. As part of this particular initiative in bringing the price to $1, we are actually going to rationalize the margins that are available, and probably for the *Hansard*, I could indicate that the price per litre of $1 will be comprised of the price ex-NGC of 38.5 cents. We have reduced the excise duty margin to zero; we will have an amortization margin of 19.2 cents; retail margin we will maintain at 25 cents; the wholesale margin will be reduced to zero; we will put in a refueller margin at 5 cents, which is the margin that NP has—NP, sorry, has a zero cent margin. So they will now get a 5 cents margin as part of that; and then there is an overall growth margin which the wholesalers will get, which will be 12.3 cents.

So—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Could you repeat those figures, please?

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Yes. So it will be 38.5 for the ex-NGC.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Thirty-eight point five?

2.45 p.m.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Thirty-eight; three-eight. Excise—well, no excise duty. Amortization margin, 19.2; retail margin, 25; wholesale margin, well, zero. We will put in a gross margin of 12.3 and we have the refueller margin of five

cents per litre of gasoline equivalent. So we have changed the "am"—and we have put in a gross margin that was not there before. So we have changed it up a bit to reflect how we would want to see it in line with the fact that we also need to ensure that the wholesalers have a pricing mechanism that is transparent and could be fully accounted for in the entire process.

So we have unified the pricing for both of the major wholesalers of CNG today, retail—the ones who are selling to the retail stations. I am not treating NGC as a wholesaler. Right? It is just NP and Unipet, basically, would be the major wholesalers. Right? But any new wholesaler, of course, would share in the same margins. So the proposed margins to get to one dollar would be the ones that I have just outlined in some detail. So, Mr. President, what we are doing is we are rationalizing as part of the overall initiative to also get this particular arrangement moving forward, we are also rationalizing the pricing structure between the major wholesalers in the industry.

As I said, this is not the only solution we are looking at for dealing with the environmentally-friendly issue, we will look at the hybrids and the electric vehicles. We recognize some of the issues that are associated with those including cost of things, like lithium batteries and so on which tends to be extremely expensive, and we also note the fact that these technologies are also relatively new in the world, and of course, will be new to Trinidad and Tobago, and we need to also consider the effect of having to provide the support infrastructure for these types of vehicles in terms of servicing and maintenance going forward. But we expect that—but, as I said, the major issue for us is the fact that we have to deal with the question of the fact that the bulk of vehicles—the legacy that we will be continuing will be that we will have 700,000 vehicles on our roads that we need to convert, that we need to make much more fuel efficient and that we need to make much more environmentally friendly.

Alongside this, of course, Mr. President, we have to consider other issues as far as the question of what is happening with respect to the mass transit systems, and what kind of initiatives could be put in place for that. I know that the Minister of Transport is in the process of looking at a number of options, including a bus rapid transit system, to address the whole question of the people movers that we need to have in Trinidad and Tobago.

One of the issues, of course, with the hybrids which we have been trying to work out too, is the whole question of the payback on these particular—given the tax breaks that we will have to give, what we expect the payback to be. The payback seems to be a little bit long given the relatively small volumes that we

expect of these vehicles. Based on the preliminary analyses that we had done, the payback on some of those vehicles seem to be in the region of 12 years which is somewhat long for vehicles on the whole because people tend to change their vehicles sooner than 12 years.

So those are some issues that we have to consider as part of the whole initiative to introduce a new regime—a new fiscal regime that would incentivize the uptake of these particular types of vehicles. It is not as straightforward as perhaps one might think given the fact that it is an alternative that is perhaps available in other jurisdictions, and certainly, it is one that we should consider for Trinidad and Tobago also, but we need to be mindful of the fact that the payback period on these things tend to be long.

So, Mr. President, the initiative here is part of a wider initiative which the Government has begun as far as CNG is concerned. We are in the process of rolling out the other pieces of this overall initiative, and this is intended to complement what we are doing and to encourage the more widespread uptake of CNG in Trinidad and Tobago.

So, Mr. President, with these words, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed.

Sen. Faris Al-Rawi: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. President. I rise—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Maharaj: Last of the Mohicans! [*Laughter*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—to make contribution to the Motion before the Senate—that is Motion No. 2 standing under Government Business. May I, with your leave, Mr. President, take the opportunity to welcome Sen. Singh who is sitting behind me for the first time in this Senate. It is good to have such a young man sitting on the bench with us this afternoon, if I dare say that he looks that young. His sister Senator sitting to his right, Sen. Dr. Edwards, is no stranger to the Senate having sat here with us at many a late-night sitting.

Mr. President, the hon. Minister provided an interesting introduction to this particular Motion. Indeed, he reflected quite properly that CNG is not new business to Trinidad and Tobago. The hon. Minister put forward concepts including that this matter is not that straightforward, that we need to be mindful of certain issues including payback options, et cetera. The hon. Minister reflected upon things including safety; he reflected upon the risk of explosion. The hon. Minister reflected upon the legacy issue of continuing the work of the conversion of CNG as a philosophy and looking to get that buy-in on account of the two

purposes: one being the reduction of the amount of subsidy spent on gasoline—gas in general, if I put it that way—and secondly, to green our approach somewhat better by reducing our carbon footprint. The hon. Minister, in fact, reflected that CNG is a safe option and he said that if one had done the research into contributions made by Colm Imbert sitting in 2008, as he did, that one would have realized that that was correct. The hon. Minister reflected upon the fact that this makes economic sense, Mr. President—a number of reflections.

But, Mr. President, before I come into my analysis of those reflections, I have one question by way of an intellectual position to put to the Senate. This Motion before us requires that the Order shall—the Order after issue shall, after four days, and within 21 days from the date of first publication, be submitted to the Senate and the House of Representatives, and the Senate and House of Representatives may, by resolution, confirm, amend, revoke such Order. So this Motion before us is to confirm, amend or revoke an order. This Motion has been dealt with in the House of Representatives. This Motion is being dealt with in the Senate today. So, unlike money Bills where the Senate really has no say at all, the Senate, in fact, has a say today. The Senate has a say insofar as it can amend, it can affirm or it can revoke this Order.

But the first question that jumps out at me, and perhaps the hon. Minister will deal with this from a lawful perspective, is whether we are, in fact, 21 days within the time frame prescribed by the Order. Is the Senate debating this Order in the correct time? That is the first issue that jumps out at me from the manner in which the resolution is cast. I do not have an answer to that, I am looking for guidance from the hon. Minister, perhaps through you and the Secretariat that the Clerk of the Senate provides, but the question is whether we are within time for this Motion to pass in the Senate.

Mr. President, I return now to the observations of my learned colleague and perhaps it is fitting that he sits as Minister of Finance and the Economy today, and perhaps it is fitting that he reflected that we are continuing a legacy of discussion of CNG issues. CNG, as an alternative fuel, of course, is not new to this country; it has been brought to the table quite some time ago in the early 1980s. But what was interesting is to listen to his words quoting from those who sat as the Government in 2008, quoting the words of the Member for Diego Martin North/East then, as he still is, Colm Imbert—quoting his words. Because, I had a chance to reflect upon that very debate, Friday, November 07, 2008, and I am shocked at what was said in that debate by the Members of the UNC Bench then. Because, it cannot be, hon. Minister, [*Laughter*] that you just skipped over all of the pages of the UNC's contributions.

Sen. Howai: I spoke to the relevant submissions.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: You say you spoke—in crosstalk to me now—to the relevant submissions, being the submissions by the Member for Diego Martin North/East, but I am sure that the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar sitting then, as she still does, as the Member for Siparia, had some relevant submissions to make and that you took her seriously. I am sure that you also thought that the Member for St. Augustine then, hon. Vasant Bharath, Member of Parliament then, now sitting as Minister of Trade, Industry and Investment in this Senate, had some relevant submissions to make then.

Sen. Howai: "Be careful what yuh saying now." [*Laughter*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Because, Mr. President, it crossed my mind whether I should salt and pepper this very paper in my hand because it would perhaps make it more palatable for those opposite to eat their own words with a little condiment added to it. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Cudjoe: Hmm!

Hon. Senator: Sugar.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Sugar perhaps! But, Mr. President, it is those very words that I want to reflect upon because the issues are relevant still.

Sen. Hinds: What they recommended? Alcohol [*Inaudible*]? [*Laughter*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: And this is the debate appearing in the House of Representatives, Friday, November 07, 2008, and in particular, the contributions of the hon. Vasant Bharath sitting then as he did, and of Mrs. Persad-Bissessar sitting then as she did.

Now, Mr. President, the first observation which is still relevant for today—and I am very grateful that the hon. Minister condescended in this Senate to provide the breakdown of the proposed adjustments to the pricing structure, because in reflecting upon the debate that he led in the House of Representatives that did not feature then. I am sure that when he read the contribution of the Minister of Finance sitting in November 2008, he realized it would have been a helpful thing for that form of statistic to be provided to the Houses of Parliament so that we could consider how the margins were being adjusted in the pricing structure. So I welcomed that approach and I hope that we do have that circulated amongst Members.

Mr. President, the issue that arose then in 2008, and that is still relevant, was raised by Vasant Bharath sitting as the Member for St. Augustine then when he had this to say, Mr. President, and I quote with your leave, I am sure, from page 11. He said that:

"……revenue from application fees for CNG…"—is still a relevant issue and that is revenue—"under the Petroleum Act, Chapter 62:01…"

He said that:

"This is very important for several reasons, not least of which it could mean, therefore, that every single supplier of CNG to vehicles in this country and every single installer of CNG kits to motor cars in this country are actually operating outside of the law."

3.00 p.m.

And here is why he said that, Mr. President. The Hon. Senator then reflected upon the Draft Estimates of Revenue for the financial year 2008 and it was his position that because those draft revenues showed figures of $7,000, Mr. President, as estimated figures, et cetera, that surely that could not be reflective of the CNG stations that were operating then. So it piqued my curiosity, Mr. President, to go and have a look at the *Draft Estimates of Revenue for the Financial Year 2014*. And at page 10, Mr. President, under "Head 03", under "Taxes on Goods and Services", Mr. President, under the subheading of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, Items 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 come into immediate reference.

"Item 009" deals with "Petroleum Licences"—sorry, item 010:

"Application Fees" for "Compressed Natural Gas Licences

Item 011 Compressed Natural Gas Service Licence

Item 012 Compressed Natural Gas Marketing Licence

Item 013 Compressed Natural Gas Consumer Refuelling"

Mr. President, most spectacularly, in 2008 it was the submission of the Member for St. Augustine that there was cogent evidence, his words, that the revenue laws of Trinidad and Tobago were being breached by a failure to collect revenue because certain items were indicated as nil under those same subheads that I read, and that $7,000 then could not possibly be the licence fee which, when you prorate it across the number of suppliers who have licences, that that figure could not possibly equal to the number of people who are actually in production. And he made a great statement saying that the Government should act upon this and he was being cautious that the Government was not breaching the revenue laws of Trinidad and Tobago. But yet in the 2014, Revenue for the Financial Year 2014, Draft Estimates, listen to these figures, Mr. President. Under Head 011:

"2012 Actual $3,140"

Under heading 012:

"$5,000"

Under heading 013, zero dollars. Under heading 014—sorry, 013, zero dollars.

The revised estimates, Mr. President, get even better. We drop from heading 010 from a figure of "$4,141", we drop to "$2,000". We drop under Head 012, from "$5,000" to "$4,500" and we stay at zero. So Mr. President, what jumped out at me then was if that was such a burning issue for the UNC's first speaker to speak about then, that the revenue laws were being breached in Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. President, he now sits as the Minister of Trade, Industry and Investment and he sits as a Minister in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, and yet the figures are lower than in 2008. The figures are zero where they had actual numbers. So what is it, Mr. President? How could it be acceptable then as a serious point, and not acceptable now?

But, Mr. President, it gets better, by way of serious issues. Mr. President, the Hon. Senator for St. Augustine then wanted to

> "…know" if "the Government has been sleeping on the issue of revenue collection…"—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: Good question.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:

> —"…or is it really that these operators and installers have been operating illegally and outside the ambit of the law."

So there is the question in the context of a CNG debate to lower the amount of revenue that we are going to collect as a nation. There is a legitimate question put to the PNM then, in 2008, whilst it was in an overheated economy, building left, right, and centre, having spent close to maybe $200—I would say in its total incarnation up to 2010—having spent $271 billion, here is the Member for St. Augustine asking then, in 2008, is it that the Government has been sleeping on revenue and that licensing fees are critical to the revenue of Trinidad and Tobago?

So, number one, they have done no better. Number two, in all of the appropriation bills that we have engaged in in this Parliament, Mr. President, the 10th Parliament of this republic, we are very, very long on expenditure. We have had four budgets, back to back, amounting to $275 billion in four budgets alone, and we are very short on revenue. Must I remember now, Mr. President, that as we seek to affect revenue in this Motion, that we have foregone, as a nation, close to $1 billion worth of revenue in property taxes, Mr. President.

Hon. Senator: "Hmm".

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: And, Mr. President, we have failed to do any form of reform or consolidation of our taxation position, and our taxation net, in closing the loopholes in the system, and in mending the holes in the buckets. We have failed to do anything by way of reform in the revenue collecting agencies which the VAT office comprises and which the Board of Inland Revenue comprises. We have not even come up with a replacement to something which resembles the Revenue Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. But, Mr. President, the hon. Members of Parliament then thought that it was important to remember that CNG was in fact a very dangerous product. And it really crossed my mind, in the Minister's reflections on this debate in 2008, how the following words could not have jumped out at him, Mr. President.

And those words appearing at page 70 of that debate, Mr. President, asked:

> Are we "repeating the same mistakes. That is the point I was getting at. This high revenue dependency from the energy sector…So we could well end up like" a "dose of salts period, the Dutch Disease from the period which took place in 1983 where you came" from and "you saw as" an alternative "at that time. What are we doing now?" Why are we saying, all we want right now is to go into CNG? "That was a solution in 1983, 25 years ago. Twenty-five years ago the Government then saw…a solution, CNG. Is that still viable and feasible today?
>
> I am saying the 1983 solution is fine 25 years ago; today's solutions are in renewable energy …green energy. Those are the solutions and we had the chance in this country with Caroni (1975) Limited, with thousands of acres of sugar cane, which you closed down" and which "we could have utilized that."

Do you know whose words those are, Mr. President? Those words are the words of none other than Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

Hon. Senator: "Hmm". [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: And what I find amazing today, Mr. President, is that having been stripped down from the plan which existed at the time when, in 2008 the PNM sought to reduce the amount of revenue to be collected from CNG, Mr. President, in terms of the licence fees and the amount of subsidy was going to be increased, reducing costs; we would have foregone VAT, we would have foregone motor vehicle taxes, et cetera, but back then, Mr. President, in 2008, we had a very different system in effect. There was a clearly articulated plan, which was debated in that particular matter in 2008 which spoke to the development of a

rapid rail and public transportation system. The cost was identified at $15 billion, a feasibility study was put into effect, which we have learnt cost about half a billion dollars, Mr. President. And the proposal of the Government then, was that it was unacceptable for people to be trapped in traffic, having crossed the threshold of the number of cars that we should have passing for any one hour.

The view was that it was unacceptable—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: [*Inaudible*] feasibility study?

Sen. F Al-Rawi:—for the people of Trinidad and Tobago [*Crosstalk*] to not have a mass transit system, Mr. President. And, the view then espoused by the Opposition, now Government, by UNC, was that people in Trinidad and Tobago had the lowest fuel prices in Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. President, and "that we must ask ourselves, is that really a bad thing?" Those were the words appearing at page 17 of that debate, Mr. President.

Mr. President, it was quite stark therefore, to hear an observation by the hon. Vasant Bharath then:

> "If this Government really wanted to help people in Trinidad and Tobago, it would reduce the price of premium gasoline, which is environmentally friendly; it is clean, it can be used on any gasoline engine, you do not need to have" a "conversion cost and it would result in an immediate conversion by the vast majority of vehicles in Trinidad and Tobago."

That could not be the same people now sitting in Government, advocating then that a rapid rail system was wrong—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: "Um-hmm".

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—that $15 billion to be spent to move hundreds of thousands of people a day, from south Trinidad to north Trinidad; from east Trinidad to west Trinidad, Mr. President, on a dedicated route—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: For the foreseeable future.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—for the foreseeable future. That, Mr. President, at $15 billion, when one compares the cost of a minor route from San Fernando to Point Fortin costing $7.5/$8.5 billion, Mr. President. How could $15 billion be expensive then, in an overheated climate, where the costs were higher then and would no doubt have fallen now? But here, Mr. President, are the members of the UNC saying if the Government really wanted to help the people of Trinidad and Tobago, it would reduce the price of premium gasoline.

Sen. Hinds: Do it now!

Sen. Dr. Henry: But they raised it.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: But what happened? Yes, Sen. Henry is, of course, stating where I am about to go. We know what happened. The Government did not come in and drop the price of premium gasoline. What did it do? It raised the price of premium gasoline.

Sen. Hinds: "Oooh gor". Typically UNC.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: It removed the subsidy. But, Mr. President—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: [*Inaudible*] lie.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—there is nothing wrong with removing the subsidy on gasoline, as we have to as a nation, under certain circumstances, when the system is right. The IMF is on record as warning us that our transfers and subsidies are unsustainable, Mr. President. Fifty per cent unsustainable immediately. And so, Mr. President, it was recklessness beyond measure, for the UNC to fool the people of Trinidad and Tobago, much like they fooled the people of Trinidad and Tobago about receiving pensions at 60, much like they fooled the people—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: [*Inaudible*] they lie".

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—of Trinidad and Tobago about axing the tax—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: Lie"! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—Mr. President.

Sen. Hinds: Deception.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: It was recklessness beyond belief, Mr. President.

Hon. Senator: As usual.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: And, Mr. President, where are we now, in removing a fuel subsidy, Mr. President? The PNM's plan on this measure, as reiterated by Dr. Rowley speaking for the PNM in the Budget this year, is that a mass transit system is going to happen under the next PNM government beginning in 2015 and that that is going to happen—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hadeed: Dreamers.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—because it is unacceptable for our citizens to be locked in their cars—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: The COP is dead.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—burning gas, burning fuel—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hadeed: Dream.

Hon Senator: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—not having the option to change to CNG because of prohibitive costs, [*Crosstalk*] Mr. President, but it is unacceptable of them, not for them, not to have a mass transit system. [*Crosstalk*] So the plan, Mr. President, under a PNM Government, was definitely to remove slowly, the gas subsidy, but to do so when people had an alternate measure to turn to—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: "Um-hmm".

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—and that is the rapid rail transportation system.

3.15 p.m.

Mr. President, it was not only rapid rail; it was also the water taxi system. But, Mr. President, do you know what the water taxi system was called? Page 18 of the same debate, Friday, November 07, 2008, paragraph one:

> "These knee-jerk solutions that I am talking about, kneejerk solutions like the water taxis which are going to cost us hundreds of millions of dollars, again, without the benefit of any feasibility study that we are aware of."

That is how the Government now, sitting as Opposition then, referred to the water taxi system.

But, Mr. President, nowhere in the Minister of Finance and the Economy's contribution today, or in the other place on this Motion, does he speak to the conversion of the water taxi system to a CNG model, nowhere! Is it still on the cards? Is it a workable scenario? Is it something that we should be looking at? Would that allow, therefore, for an expansion of the water taxi system? What we do know is that this Government took away bus transportation systems in Trinidad and Tobago.

Pleasantville, by way of example, enjoyed a service for its senior citizens, of bus transportation services four times a day and now they are reduced to two times a day. So we know that the $275 billion spent by this Government and allocated by this Government is not going to an expansion of the water taxi system, to an expansion of the bus service system for our elderly people. It cannot be because it is not happening and there is no statement.

The hon. Minister speaks to this coordinating with their plan. What plan? I, despite best efforts, genuinely cannot discern a plan from this Government as to most things. I know that there is a plan to do certain things. I do not want to be unparliamentary and speak to those, but I cannot identify a mass transit plan. I do know that a bus transportation/rapid bus system arose under my good friend, Sen. Maharaj, when he sat as Minister of Transport. That was quickly scrapped because it failed to meet with procurement practices which are best for that kind of class. Let me put it at its highest.

Sen. Maharaj: You have that wrong.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: What we do know is that people in Trinidad and Tobago are trapped in their cars, still; what we do know is that the cost of conversion, as my learned colleague, the Minister of Finance and the Economy has just put it, still lies within the zone of $10,000.

Mr. President, the information that comes to me is that the cost of converting, by way of kit cost for cars that use premium gasoline is $4,700; those that use super, $4,700; taxis that use super, $7,000; taxis that use diesel, $10,500; maxis, $14,000; and commercial diesel, $10,500 with payback options on that capital expenditure, in terms of conversion kits, standing at seven years for the cars with 4,700; 12 years for the cars of super; 15 years—sorry 15,000 kilometres, not years, over a two-year period; 7,000 kilometres; 12,000 kilometres; 15,000 kilometres; 57,000 kilometres and $18,043, giving you nearly three years or 27 months.

The figures in 2008, as addressed in the last CNG debate, have not changed to 2013, and, therefore, the question arises as to why the Government, now sitting as it does, with the benefit of the advice given to it by persons as esteemed as the hon. Sen. Bharath and now the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, why their own issues have not been answered and why the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy has not condescended to offer an explanation, let alone an answer to those issues.

Mr. President, the fact is that it is axiomatic that we ought to support an order of this type. It is axiomatic that we need to remove the subsidy on fuel, all fuels. But it is axiomatic that it must be done in an orderly and structured way, where the people of Trinidad and Tobago, when walls go up prohibitively, in terms of the cost of gasoline and transportation fuels, have a mechanism to turn to, and most importantly, mass transit systems so that we can get it right.

Now, my learned colleague, the Minister of Finance and the Economy, spoke very briefly to the issue of the use of hybrid vehicles. The encouragement by Mrs. Persad-Bissessar, in 2008, then in that debate I referred to, was that the future, the reality in

2008, was that we should go green using hybrid vehicles. The PNM's response then was that CNG was required because rapid rail was going to happen, it was going to be implemented; bus services were put out in a maximum way and water taxi services were being run and implemented. We know now, rapid rail scratched, bus services reduced and no replacement policies in place. So the PNM's rationale in 2008, for encouraging the use of CNG, was a real easily explained, logical prospect. There is illogic in this current construct because whilst CNG is definitely a source of fossil fuel that can be used, which is greener in its carbon footprint and more economical for implementation, the fact is that the substructure of policy construction is absent.

Mr. President, it is important for the Government to speak with particularity as to its mass transit systems. We cannot be left in the dark as to what this country can expect. We knew, under a PNM budget of 10 years put together, with $271 billion, what we were getting. We knew that $15 billion was going to rapid rail. We knew that feasibility studies would have been paid for as well. But under $275 billion of this Government, there is no identification of that. And, so, it is important for us to remember that there will be less incentive for people to move to CNG in the current construct; that is with the removal of the legs upon which we were to stand, meaning rapid rail, water taxi and bus service.

But Mr. President, the Member for St. Augustine, in 2008, made a very important statement. He said that, a very good example to be followed was that which the Government itself should set out and he said—and I found this absolutely hilarious and so much so that I needed to reflect upon it again today—he said, I want this Government to know. Mr. President, I should say at page 18, the hon. Member for St. Augustine reflected that $10,000 is really outside the reach of most citizens to purchase conversion kits. He said:

> "They, of course, have"—that is the people—"been sacrificed at the Government's altar of political expediency. Is the Government really leading by example? Has the Minister of Finance, for example, converted her vehicle to CNG? What about the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, has he converted his vehicle to CNG?"

So I turn now to the Minister of Finance and the Economy. Hon. Minister, through you, Mr. President, have you converted your car to CNG? Has the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, beyond his quick ride on a Prius for the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, converted his car? Has any Member opposite us converted their cars? No! The answer is: No! But listen to these words, hence the thought for salt, pepper and, perhaps, sugar.

Sen. Howai: And condensed milk.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Page 19—and maybe even this requires condensed milk. [*Laughter*]

> "But nevertheless, I want to let this Government know that setting an example is not the main means of influencing another. It is the only means of influencing others and we must lead by example. If we expect people to do things and if we expect this country to follow us, we must, as politicians and as leaders ask them to do, not as we say, but as we do also."

So, four budgets back-to-back, a change out of 12 Senators opposite and they are heckling today about us being under review. No big deal, Mr. President. We in the PNM—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: Look at you, they cannot touch you!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—are proud to serve in whatever capacity we are chosen to serve in. Much like the hon. Vice-President of the Senate served for years in the PNM, when he then saw the light and his vision was somewhat brighter. But, the fact is that the Government now is on record speaking to leading by example. And not only have they removed every leg upon which the CNG strategy was meant by a PNM government to gain strength, the mass transit system, the public transportation, water taxis, not only have they removed and eroded and damaged that system, but they are not even leading by example.

You do know, Mr. President, that this Government has the distinguished honour of being the first Government to instruct that Government Ministers receive vehicles in addition to those which the State provides to them in their personal capacities. They were allowed to do that. There is a change in the orders provided but we do know that the Parliament gives to us, as Senators, that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago allows us duty-free concessions on cars, motor vehicle tax exemptions and VAT exemptions so that we may have a vehicle for use in our parliamentary duties while serving the State as we do as Independent Senators and as persons in Opposition—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: Range Rovers?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—but we have a Government having two bites at the cherry and in biting that cherry twice, in terms of selecting cars, some persons four times, not one CNG car of an original manufacture's specification capable of achieving the benefits provided under legislation now, has been bought by a single Member opposite. So, Mr. President, where are we going?

Hon. Member: We reach.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: The hon. Members, in 2008, reflected upon another very important issue, something which they sang to ad nauseam and that was the issue of knowing what companies in the oil and gas industry were doing by way of enjoyment of concessions given to them. Both the Member for St. Augustine, Vasant Bharath in 2008, and the Member for Siparia, Mrs. Persad-Bissessar, spoke to these mega companies and international companies achieving concessions and of the need to know what the gas prices were, so that we could understand whether we were getting value for money. All of them spoke to it and the fact is, we have had nothing other than silence.

For four years, two Ministers of Energy later, I have not heard a single announcement of a gas price. But it is not only announcement orally, let alone appearing in budget speeches; listen to the written answer to question 22 on our Order Paper. These contracts, and this is a question in relation to AUM Ammonia; Caribbean Nitrogen Company; Nitrogen 2000; PCS 1, 2, 3, 4; Point Lisas Nitrogen Limited; Tringen; Tringen; Yara; TTMC Plant; Caribbean Methanol Plant; TTMC Plant; Methanol Four Plant; M5000 Plant; Mitsubishi DME; Gasfin Constantine; Eastern Caribbean Gas Pipeline. Those last two selected out. These contracts, between the respective downstream companies and NGC, are under confidentiality provisions. Such information cannot be disclosed publicly, as disclosures will have material negative impact.

3.30 p.m.

So, Mr. President, this country was led to believe when the UNC was in Opposition last, and the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs who is a student of history will know this well. We were led to believe that upon entry by the UNC into Government, all gas prices would be made public, all information related to companies and their gas pricing [*Desk thumping*] would be public, all. You could look in Standing Orders as to questions as much as you want—

Sen. Hinds: "See how dey wicked."

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—I am safe within my wicket and boundary.

Sen. Hinds: "See how dey wicked."

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: But, Mr. President, the fact is you have answered none of them. We as a nation do not yet know where we are headed to on our gas pricing contracts that are going to expire and come up for renewal in the period 2015—2018. We do know that we enjoy the benefit of infrastructure and development by

our partners because they were into low-cost production, and that the elemental cost of gas is important in that but, not a word. In fact, the Ryder Scott report lived large in the mouths of the UNC every single day prior to 2010: gas was running out, oil was running out, Trinidad and Tobago was doomed, the three P's, proven, probable and possible reserves were in great jeopardy, Mr. President.

There was a meeting the other day by a very high-ranking member of the—CEO of a particular energy company, and in having a conversation with him, he said to me, you know, it is warming to know that Trinidad and Tobago now is no longer concerned that gas and oil is going to run out. You are no longer preoccupied with bringing negative reflection to the Ryder Scott report, and I said to him, surely you know why.

Sen. Ramnarine: It is positive now.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: He said to me, no. I said because the people that downcried it are all now in Government, so they cannot bad talk the truth. And the fact is I must except the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs now, he was not in Opposition then. I know that he gives straight answers, but the fact is that the hysteria created by the UNC in Opposition, the deception unleashed on to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, that CNG was bad, that you should not increase the price of premium fuel, that you should drop the price of premium fuel, that this Government wanted to starve you out, that a mass-transit system was wrong for Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. President.

Sen. Cudjoe: That is how they operate.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: That you needed to axe the tax, Mr. President. All of that turns out to be of the same kind of misprint, misstep, misstatement and deceit as telling pensioners who are going to vote for you, that everybody will get a pension at age 60. That is the kind of deceit, Mr. President, put squarely as to what it is.

So, Mr. President, the fact is that this Parliament has a lot of serious business to do.

Sen. Hinds: "Yuh hearing Archbishop?"

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: The fact is, Mr. President, that there is much more important work that we could do, for instance, in discussing the bringing to life of the Children's Authority, Mr. President, that is a very important issue for this nation to deal with. Vasant Bharath in 2008, in winding up his speech said quite cogently, and I agree with him. He said:

In relation to CNG being a trivial issue, that he felt, Mr. President, that there was much more important issues that we could deal with like dealing with the Children's Authority and children's legislation. It was current then. And today I say that there is also an importance to deal with the protection of our children. I sat as a Member of this Senate with some Members—certainly some Members behind, all Members present on my bench and a few Members present opposite, because many of them have changed. [*Interruption*]

But, the fact is, Mr. President, that we rushed to put in the children's legislation. We have had two Ministers with responsibility for children, Mr. President. One who was very vocal and piloted the Children Bill which became the Act, and one who was deafly silent for the time that she occupied that chair. [*Desk thumping*] I think she has made two contributions equal to maybe 30 minutes max collectively.

Sen. Cudjoe: Thirty?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: But, Mr. President, the fact is we have important issues like protecting our children that we must deal with, but why then are we dealing with a Motion like this? Ill thought out [*Interruption*] in the context of the Government needing to at least tell us what its real policy is in relation to the structure to support the move away from gas-driven cars to CNG-driven cars.

It is important for the Government if it wants to put teeth into this manoeuver, for the Government to tell us that it intends to deliver a mass-transit system in the following fashion; it intends to deliver its rapid bus transit system in the following fashion. They have done a feasibility study; they know what the cost is. Give the people of Trinidad and Tobago some hope that it is soon coming, that their $275 billion has been well spent, because unless you do that, Mr. President, there is no incentive to move to CNG.

Mr. President, what is all the much more alarming is the fact that the push towards hybrid electric car mix, whether purely electric or hybrid in terms of gas and electric, is all the much more readily apparent when we remember that Trinidad and Tobago has the benefit of the TGU electrical facility, Mr. President.

We, Mr. President, must remember that Trinidad Generation Unlimited is, according to the answer to question 26A. on this Order Paper:

The TGU facility is fully operational and is capable of supplying the full output.

So if we have this kind of electricity which cannot be delivered to Trinidad and Tobago because the distribution system is not up, and the distribution system is not up because it was never contemplated that that power capacity needed to go beyond the industrial estate that it was anchoring, the aluminium smelter or the SURAL project, et cetera but, Mr. President—[*Interruption*]

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, the speaking time of Sen. Al-Rawi has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. F. Hinds*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. President: Sen. Al-Rawi. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Thank you, Mr. President. I am saying that we have the benefit of the TGU facility, that facility as we know was intended to be an anchor in an industrial estate which would provide revenue earners for Trinidad and Tobago. And in providing revenue earners, Mr. President, we would then be able to begin the crawl away and diversification away from our energy reliance by creating use in that industrial estate.

So we created all of this energy capacity. We have 720 megawatts available. We cannot distribute it because the infrastructure is not yet there. It was intended to be delivered to an industrial estate there but, Mr. President, if we have that much electricity and electricity which is gas-driven as well, does it not make better sense for us to move towards a hybrid transportation system where we use electricity? Because it is by far a cleaner footprint for the electrical charge to be delivered to a car where the CO_2 and other emissions happen at the electrical facility—that is TGU—where it can be controlled and managed, rather than managing every single car that uses, albeit 40 per cent less carbon emissions, Mr. President, CNG.

So the fact is, not only do we have the supply of electricity available, not only do we subsidize that supply of electricity—under take-or-pay obligations we are paying right now for electricity that we cannot use—not only do we have it gas-driven in some instances, Mr. President, but we can clean that carbon footprint at source and encourage the rapidly evolving technology of hybrid electric cars, to come into ready operation. Because whilst it is true that there is a legacy of some 700 [*sic*] existing gas-driven cars on the roads, the fact is, Mr. President, that when you look to the importation figures for cars, we have a massive number coming in. Therefore, with the United States march and with other jurisdictions like Japan's march towards using electric-driven cars, Mr. President, it makes better sense for us to accept the words of Kamla Persad-Bissessar in 2008 and push into the hybrid situation for electric use.

All the elements are there: we can get lower emissions; we can control it better; the technology can be delivered. But, Mr. President, the hon. Minister cannot just get off the hook, figuratively speaking, by telling us well, we are

working on a policy and some incentives. It is not an impossible thing to do now. Because, Mr. President, if we were serious about the CNG thrust, we would have partnered with entities such as Cheniere that are leading the shale gas revolution in the United States of America. And you do remember Cheniere came to Trinidad and Tobago under a PNM Government, signed an MOU with a PNM Government to partner with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and NGC, to go into a partnership taking Trinidad and Tobago's NGC global, not only into spot trading of cargoes and dealing with commodities, but to partner with it in Africa and elsewhere.

But, Mr. President, we know not this Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, but a previous Minister of Energy threw that project away and what we ended up with, Mr. President, is being shunned by what was then a little-known entity and is today the largest or one of the largest members and players in the shale gas revolution in the United States of America.

So you must be careful—to this Government, you must be careful of who you burn. Do not throw it away just because it was a PNM thing as my friend, past Sen. Deyalsingh, now Member for St Joseph, is wont to say. Do not throw it away just because it is a PNM thing, Mr. President. You burned one of the largest players globally to the point where Africa wants nothing to do with Trinidad and Tobago. Entities like Kenson Production Services of San Fernando, that have spent a lot of time in Africa building upon the hundred years plus experience we have in oil and gas, they are finding it harder and harder to merge into that important emerging, strong market where we need partners in Africa.

So, Mr. President, the substruct basis of support for the CNG thrust is most respectfully not there, hon. Minister. The identification of a policy for mass transit movement of people in Trinidad and Tobago is critical and immediate, hon. Minister. It is intolerable that you have passed through four budgets and cannot yet tell us what your policy is on rapid transit systems.

And, therefore, Mr. President, I would borrow the words of Vasant Bharath sitting in 2008 in the House of Representatives in saying, there surely is a lot more important work that this Parliament can be engaged in, and in particular that that work is most critically for the children of Trinidad and Tobago.

3.45 p.m.

I hope that the hon. Prime Minister can give us some hope by announcing who is to comprise a committee to put into effect the Children's Authority because it is clear that her past Minister could not and gave us no explanation; and it is

incumbent for us as a nation to treat with the alarming issue of the death of innocent children in Trinidad and Tobago. That intolerable pain and grief, that sick tragedy carried out on to poor, little children in this country must be abhorred by us as a Parliament and I do hope that somewhere in today's sitting that the Ministers opposite have some form of explanation as to why an entire Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development cannot bring to life the Children's Authority and why a task force—an unnamed, unpopulated, unparticularized task force—must be brought to deliver that situation and solution.

With those few words, Mr. President, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Sen. Ramkhelawan.

Sen. Subhas Ramkhelawan: Thank you, Mr. President. I rise to make a contribution on this particular Motion, which really is a Motion apparently about the reduction of the excise duty, by 7 cents, to zero in this particular instance, and for the sale thereafter of CNG, per litre equivalent, at a price of $1.

But I wonder, really, is this the real issue that we are here to address because if that were the case—that we are talking about a 7 cents reduction—then I put it to you, Mr. President, that this debate should be extremely short. As it has turned out, it is not and there are reasons for that because I believe the real issue that we as a nation have to face is, at what point in time and in what sequence are we going to reduce the subsidy on gas?

If we address that question, then we will, in summary, address this question of CNG. The whole question of CNG really is about seeking to replace high-cost energy in the form of premium, super and diesel. I say high cost because to the consumer, diesel might be $1.50 per litre, but it is the most subsidized gas being used by the 700,000, or part of those 700,000 vehicles on the roads today.

We as a nation have to come to grips with the fact that we cannot continue to subsidize at the rate that we are subsidizing gas prices to the consumer. CNG is supposed to be an alternative. The point though is that the rate at which we are replacing, or we intend to replace gas with CNG is far too slow to deal with the hemorrhage that is taking place in terms of subsidization in the energy sector.

Indeed, some of the reports that I have been seeing in the newspapers suggest that the extent of subsidy could rise as high as $7 billion by the year 2014, and these are from experts. And if that is the case, if it is $5 billion now, it really means that it is some 10 per cent or close to 10 per cent of the revenue generated by the Government.

Now this is very significant, Mr. President, because it is unsustainable. It is unsustainable because we are already in deficit mode and being in deficit mode, we cannot continue to carry this heavy burden that is the subsidy for much longer.

What are the alternatives? Let us look first at what we may need to address. We have an economy that in a sense is very heavily dependent now on deficit spending by the public sector and, therefore, were we to remove that deficit in short order, the economy will suffer tremendously, so that it is not just a question of making a decision for the removal of the subsidy. More importantly, is the timing and sequencing of the removal of that subsidy and what will replace or how will the subsidy be made up over time.

Another question that has been posed here, and I would have read in the other place, is that the way to go is via hybrids, which might provide more energy efficient vehicles. And I think part of the answer that will come out of this or the question that we have to answer is that we now have 700,000 vehicles on the road and the rate of changeover will not be sufficient to reduce the subsidy to an extent that makes good sense for us in Trinidad and Tobago. Clearly then, what we need to do as a first cut is to accelerate the rate of usage of CNG over and beyond what we are talking about now. Seventeen thousand vehicles from the current level of 700,000 vehicles does not make the kind of dent that is required.

So then, what is at stake? Successive administrations have not been able to accelerate the supply of CNG to such an extent that they can start tweaking the other side as a policy matter where they can do what is required of them, which is to reduce the extent of subsidy in successive years. One.

So we keep dancing around the equation. The hon. Minister has spoken to the idea that it will take 12 years in terms of a payback against diesel at $1.50. It will take 12 years to pay back for the conversion. Well, maybe what I should advise the hon. Minister, if I am in a position to do so, he may need to look at a different kind of model where he begins to ratchet up the price of diesel as he begins to provide, in convenient places, CNG availability and he is already in a position to provide the replacement kits at this point in time.

So what do we have now? We have about 184 gas stations around the country. How many CNG gas stations do we have? Very few and I will give you the numbers at a later time, or maybe I will leave that for the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs to do at a later time. Suffice it to say that the records, which I have, show that the number of CNG gas stations at this point in time—if I can find the figure, Mr. President—CNG stations: National Petroleum, 8; UNIPET, 1. These are the latest figures that I have, of 184 gas stations.

So the problem is a logistical problem before policy can be enhanced and before policy, if embraced, can be implemented. What we cannot do is not have the availability of CNG in the right places for our citizens while, at the same time ratcheting up very quickly or reducing the subsidy on gas.

That is the conundrum that successive administrations have found themselves in. How are we going to do it? We do not want to cause a disruption in an already fragile economy and, therefore, we cannot pull the subsidy at one go. Secondly, we are afraid as a nation to communicate to our citizens that we cannot any longer subsidize gas in the way that we have been subsidizing. Thirdly, we have not put on the table a frame or a sequencing over which gas prices will be increased, particularly as far as diesel, the most subsidized gasoline is in place and, of course, super.

So we have played at the fringes and that fringe is, of course, premium. Tax the rich more or reduce the subsidy on the rich more because they can afford to pay. The rich are those people who may be using premium gasoline. What the Government found was that most of those people who thought that they needed to use premium, started to use super. So the difference between $5.25 and I think it is $2.70 or so, people started to move to super, so the benefits and the gains were rather muted relative to what was anticipated by Government.

At the core of it then is, what do you do with the diesel side of the equation? And it would seem that Governments are frozen on the question of what to do because there are some heavy political as well as economic considerations that have to be addressed.

The solution has to be ratcheting up the availability of CNG, so that moving from eight gas stations or CNG stations, there is need to move at a much faster clip than is being discussed in this forum with regard to CNG, failing which we continue to subsidize at a very significant rate and we continue to eat away what should be savings for our children, or the reduction of deficits for our children and our grandchildren because we are consuming what we should be saving for them or investing in capital projects.

That really is the heart of it. We have become rather afraid to deal with the situation that has arisen and we are really, in a sense, pussyfooting around the issues that have come up with regard to CNG. This is not new. I am not accusing the current administration of pussyfooting around this issue. I am saying that it is something—[*Interruption*]—that seems to be endemic in terms of administrations.

I am not going to spend too much time addressing some of the issues that have been raised; whether CNG is greener and will reduce CO_2 by 35 per cent or that it will reduce nitrogen oxide by 30 per cent. I think those matters are passé. I want to stay very brief and to the point. You need to establish the timing for the reduction in subsidies in terms of the gasoline site. At the same time, you need to ensure that you provide supply in terms of the logistics to ensure that there is the supply of CNG as needed. It is only then, when you can do that, that you can seek to reduce the subsidy over time.

That is a very simple equation, Mr. President, and it is an equation that appears to be not very well understood by those who have to take this baton and move forward. So I do not think that one can really spend too much time on the excise duty and so on. I think it is a matter that has to be addressed. I suppose it will be addressed probably after the election because nobody in politics wants to speak anything about raising gas prices; it will be seriously damaging to them. I do not think that I have much choice really than to support the Motion; [*Desk thumping*] but to appeal to the Government to take some more clinical actions in ensuring that the logistics are right and in ensuring that the supply of CNG is not only there, but it is in places where it can be properly accessed.

4.00 p.m.

As to the question of transportation policy which was raised I believe by Sen. Al-Rawi, I think as part of the policy of subsidy reduction, we will have to address, very clearly, what is the form and nature of a mass transit system that we would want. While I am not, nor have I ever been particularly convinced about a rapid rail system, I think there are other options that need to be addressed if even it is by way of a bus system, even if it is by way of decanting and allowing citizens to park and ride, but there are other measures that will have to be proven to be viable. So with these few thoughts, Mr. President, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Sen. Mahabir. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir: Thank you very much, Mr. President. I did not initially intend to speak on this particular Motion, but I think the issues raised by the Minister and by my fellow Senators, Sen. Al-Rawi and Sen. Ramkhelawan, also require, in my opinion, a little bit of locating, Mr. President, this particular Motion in the economic context and the context is, as Sen. Ramkhelawan alluded to, that very significant petroleum subsidy which has been escalating over the last decade. Given the expressed intention of the Minister of Finance and the Economy to reduce his deficit by the year 2016 or even to balance his budget, then this particular Motion seems to be very much in keeping with that particular objective.

But the real important issue, Mr. President, deals with the fact that our own petroleum reserves have been declining or we have not been finding oil in abundance, and that our daily output today is about half of what it was at its peak a decade ago. At the same time, the price of oil remains very high. So that every barrel of oil we can save in Trinidad and Tobago, by not consuming it here, is potentially available for export to ensure that our foreign exchange earnings can continue to be enhanced, and to ensure too, Mr. President, that the commodity that we do have in abundance which is natural gas, the prognosis of which internationally, as far as prices are concerned, seems to be very depressed, at least, for the medium term. Also, given the incidence of shale gas in the US means that it makes a great deal of economic sense for us to gradually substitute our fuelling for automobiles from petroleum products to natural gas. So this is a very important move, but we do need to understand the difficulties that we have experienced over a number of years.

The former administration did try and, in fact, was instrumental in inducing people to convert from the petroleum product to LNG. This was not met with much success, and it is important to ask why, despite the efforts to induce individuals to convert, we have not had the kind of success so that we just have perhaps only a dozen or so stations in the country selling the CNG product. It has to be that something was initially misunderstood with respect to the application of the policy, and now the economics of the situation requires that we move with some alacrity in this particular area.

The first issue we need to address is, really, asking ourselves, as Sen. Ramkhelawan indicated quite clearly and quite cogently: why are we so short with respect to CNG stations in the country? And it has to be that there are not many users of the product, and this means that we need to be looking at the problem of why the users of CNG are so few in relation to the 700,000 cars which are said to be operating on the roads of our Republic. One has to be the cost of conversion which we need to address but, second, it has to be that the demand for the product, which could have come from some place, simply has not emerged.

I want to reemphasize the point of Sen. Al-Rawi, if the Government of the Republic were to make a firm decision that the majority of its fleet of vehicles would use CNG over a couple of years—and this includes the vehicles of the various arms of the State, the vehicles of the police, the vehicles of the health sector—of the 700,000 it would be very important to determine how many of these are really state vehicles, how many of these are government vehicles.

If the Government can lead by example that every single bus in the country, every single vehicle that is subject to the duty free concessions that Sen. Al-Rawi alluded to—every single vehicle of the police force is a CNG consuming vehicle—then we

know that there would be a need for service stations across the country to provide the facility, and a demand for this particular CNG facility will then arise which will induce the stations themselves to start to sell the commodity. They are business enterprises, and in order for them to equip themselves with the facilities, they need to have a continuous source of demand. So the State vehicles would, in fact, in my opinion, contribute the first very important source of demand.

So there has to be that policy decision, convincing policy decision, from the Government that every individual who is associated with the State and who is driving a government owned or a government subsidized vehicle—that includes public servants, it includes us in this Parliament, Mr. President—we would and we should be driving a CNG car, a CNG car equipped at source. And that then brings me to the second issue.

So the first solution I think in addressing the problem as we gradually focus on reducing the fuel subsidy, and as we gradually try to export more of our petroleum products and consume less domestically, I think it is for the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs to be very proactive, and impress upon the Government that we do need every single state vehicle to be converted. It may not be economical for the older vehicles of the State to be so converted, but I think every newer vehicle under five years should be converted as soon as possible so that there can be this example set by the Government that it is serious about the use of CNG in our Republic.

The second solution I think that the Government might want to consider—and I am very happy that the Government, in general, does take the suggestions coming from the Independent Bench because they, I think, would hopefully see some merit in the proposals which are being suggested. [*Desk thumping*] So first, state vehicles, second, Mr. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, through you, Mr. President—and he says he always listens to me and that is gratifying—is the issue with respect to new vehicles.

We do have in the population of 700,000 vehicles an age range. We have vehicles which are now PCDs, and I suspect that series may be exhausted in a couple of months. I think the Minister of Transport and the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs and—

Sen. Singh: "Ent you have some antiques?"

Sen. Dr. D. Mahabir: Yes, Sen. Singh, I do have antique vehicles. I hope we will not touch those because those are for occasional use. [*Desk thumping*] In fact, Sen. Singh, I have some very old vehicles. You are kind in calling them antiques.

But, really, with respect to new vehicles, I think it is an important policy measure for the Government to consider that a certain percentage of these should now be equipped at source with the CNG kits. So that if the Government could agree, perhaps, to some 50 per cent of these vehicles being equipped at source, so that

there is no question of conversion here, Mr. President, it is going to be built into the price of a completely new vehicle, and I think this is the kind of policy measure which gradually over time will ensure that we have more and more vehicles on the roads which are equipped as long as they are equipped at source. The same can be said for the foreign-used vehicles. I do not think that there should be much of a problem to equip them at source with CNG kits before they are imported, and the Government may give some kind of fiscal concession in this particular area.

The other suggestion, Mr. President, with respect to the 700,000 vehicles of which some of the old and antique ones may, in fact, number, we have vehicles on the road with number plates PC. I know for a fact we have some with PB, but these are antiques. We do have some vehicles, as the Minister of Finance and the Economy indicated, which are over 10 years and we have a number of them under 10 years. He indicated that many of them, I suspect from the data that he has, are changed on a 10-year cycle, but vehicles which are, say, under five years currently on the road, I think that in the interest of reducing the petroleum subsidy, the Government can consider another subsidy, and we can work on the cost-benefit analysis.

Could we provide a subsidy to these individuals of vehicles on the road under five years so that the full cost of CNG conversion can be borne both by the owner of the vehicle and by the State, so that over a long period of time we will have more and more of these zero to five-year old vehicles equipped with the CNG kits? This is something I think we can look at, the financial mechanics of it, because it would mean that we are really trading one subsidy for reducing a larger subsidy. We are trading a subsidy on the CNG kit for reducing, ultimately, the petroleum subsidy which is causing so much of a concern for the Government and for any subsequent government which will hold the decision-making powers in the country.

Finally, Mr. President, the suggestion for the Government to consider is, given the difficulties experienced over the last decade and a half in achieving the policy objective; given the necessity of balancing our fiscal accounts; given the necessity of exporting more of our petroleum products; given the fact that we are not finding any more oil but we seem to be abundant in gas; we need to be looking not only at the hybrids that are very expensive, but to be looking at the possibility of autos which currently can be converted to use both CNG and gasoline as opposed to the kinds of Prius vehicles we know exist which are using electricity which may be very expensive, having a very high capital cost. But the technology currently is available for CNG/gasoline vehicles and I think this particular technology should be considered as well with respect to the subsidization plan of the Government.

I think if the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs and the Minister of Finance and the Economy can look at the programme in this particular way and ensure simply, Mr. President, to equip, perhaps, a half of our stations in the country with CNG to service the government vehicles over a two-year period does not seem to be an unattainable objective.

We have always known that stations, the gas stations, as we know them, have not always been gas stations, they have been multi-product stations. There have been stations in the past which sold diesel when diesel was used by tractors to service the agricultural sector. They have been serviced to sell kerosene when kerosene was in use in the rural communities for lighting and household purposes. Now we hardly find kerosene being sold because the demand is simply not there; you have to look for a station selling kerosene. But once the demand is there for CNG the stations will find it in their interest, and I reiterate, Mr. President, that it is well within the Government's power to lead from in front, equip their vehicles and insist, as Sen. Al-Rawi said, that all state vehicles, all Ministers should lead by example, and—you would see a number of stations in this country having the CNG facilities. That will be a step in the right direction.

I think with these measures which can be implemented in a stepwise manner, it would be possible for us over time to gradually convert more and more of our vehicles. This is not only in keeping with the fiscal affairs of the country, but it is also consistent with the natural resources that we have based on the simple economics: we consume what we have in abundance that is cheap, which is natural gas, and we export that which is expensive but short, which is oil.

I think with these words I would like to support the Motion of the Government and hope that they will have certain targets so that in a couple of years we will see much, much more of the 700,000 vehicles on the road equipped with this facility. I thank you, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*]

4.15 p.m.

Mr. President: The hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Kevin Ramnarine): Thank you very much, Mr. President. Mr. President, whenever I hear Sen. Dhanayshar Mahabir speak, my faith in the University of the West Indies is renewed. [*Laughter*] And I remember, Mr. President, some of those vehicles of which he spoke, the old vehicles, they are well known to the St. Augustine campus. Prof. Mahabir, as students, we all knew you by the vehicles you drove. [*Laughter*]

Mr. President, this debate, as previous speakers have all mentioned, is a very simple issue before the Parliament, and that is the issue of the change in the excise duty with regard to the build-up of the CNG price from five cents to zero cents. So what we are doing is that we are removing the excise duty from five cents to zero cents, and that the overall retail price of CNG is being reduced from $1.07 per litre gasoline equivalent to TT $1 per litre gasoline equivalent. And litre gasoline equivalent is the unit that we use when we retail CNG, and what that means essentially is that 32 cubic feet of natural gas at standard temperature and pressure is equal to one litre of gasoline.

So if I burn 32 cubic feet of natural gas, at standard temperature and pressure, which is fundamentally in this room, the energy I get from that is equivalent to the energy I get if I burn one litre of gasoline. So I hope that sheds some light on what is litre gasoline equivalent.

Mr. President, as previous speakers—when I listened to the contributions, and they were all very good contributions from previous speakers, there were several themes that emerged with regard to this particular debate. One of them, of course, is the entire relationship in the economy, between the economy itself and energy; and if you look at countries that have done pretty well, economically, they have managed that relationship between the economy and energy pretty well. And I am speaking about countries that have little resources, countries like Singapore and Japan, where because of necessity they have had to become very energy efficient.

But we have a country which is endowed with hydrocarbon resources. We have been producing hydrocarbons now for 105 years, and we have had a Petroleum Subsidy and Levy Act in this country since—I think it is 1975 or 1974, and at a different time I gave the history of how that Act came to be. So the subsidy and the levy have been in place since the mid-1970s, when they were introduced to protect the population from the vagaries of international oil price. And I will just give an example. I will give some data with regard to the actual subsidy itself.

Mr. President, I am looking specifically at diesel, because diesel is at the heart of the issue when it comes to subsidy, because as Sen. Ramkhelawan pointed out, we pay $1.50 for diesel per litre at the pump, and the actual price of diesel—if you want to get the actual price of diesel, of course it varies according to the international oil price—you have to add roughly $4 on to that. So the real price of diesel, Mr. President, is somewhere in the region of $5.50 per litre, but the population pays $1.50. The remainder of that differential between $5.50 and $1.50 is borne by the State, and it is borne to a lesser extent by the oil companies through the levy. But I will give an example. I will give some numbers.

Mr. President, for the period 2003—2013, and these are fiscal years, fiscal years 2003—2013, an 11-year period, the total amount of money spent by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago on the subsidy is TT $27.1 billion, over an 11-year period. And, of course, that subsidy is a function of two variables: one being the price of oil on the international market, and the other one being the demand for liquid fuels in the local economy, and both those variables have been on the increase in that 11-year period.

What has happened in that 11-year period is that there has been a significant increase in international oil price, and there has been an increase in the vehicle population in Trinidad and Tobago. Today we have some 700,000 vehicles in this country. From my office where I sit in Tower C, next door, Mr. President, and probably from these offices here in the Parliament, one could see—almost two times a month you could see the very large ships coming into our port of Port of Spain, and when they open their cargo, their cargo is vehicles. Those vehicles are taken down to the bond close to MovieTowne, and in a few days' time they all vanish, and we see all over the country now we see people are using vacant lands and so on to store new vehicles, and of course there is the foreign used car trade.

So we have had the increase in oil price, and we have had the increase in the vehicle population. We estimate, Mr. President, that on an annual basis, we are putting out about 25,000 new vehicles—well, when I say new vehicles I am including in that the foreign used market onto the streets of Trinidad and Tobago. So we have a very significant vehicle population per capita in Trinidad and Tobago, and that has contributed in no small measure to that $27.1 billion in subsidy which the Government has had to pay over the last 11 years.

But, Mr. President, of course, subsidies fuel all sorts of behaviours; one of the behaviours that the subsidy fuels, of course, is energy inefficiency, because fuel is cheap, people pay less attention to how they consume fuel. It also has fuelled, and no pun intended, it has fuelled the illegal trade in diesel because diesel is $1.50 per litre at the pump in Trinidad and Tobago, but diesel is, sometimes in Guyana, I am advised, diesel is about TT $6.50, if one were to do the conversion per litre in Guyana. And up the islands it is even more than that, in some cases TT $8 per litre.

So that spread between $1.50 and what obtains in our other CARICOM jurisdictions has fuelled a very significant illegal trade in diesel. I asked the Ministry to pull some data, some information here for me with regard to the actual volume of diesel, and this is subsidized diesel that is sold in Trinidad and Tobago, and these are some of the numbers. In the year 2006, Mr. President, in this

country, we sold 427 million litres of subsidized diesel. Now, we also sell unsubsidized diesel in Trinidad and Tobago. Companies that have exploration and production licences, or production sharing contracts, they must pay the world price, the market price for diesel.

So that is 2006, 427 million; it then jumped in 2007 to 463 million; it then jumped in 2008 to 527.8 million; it then rose a bit to 528.3, and in 2010 there was a sudden increase in the demand for subsidized diesel going up to 669 million litres of diesel. That was the highest ever on record. Of course, in 2011, Mr. President, I became the Minister of Energy, and one of the first things—and as a Minister one must always listen very carefully to one's public servants, because they have been there for a long time [*Desk thumping*] and they know quite a lot. And as a Minister you would find that a lot of the solutions to the problems that you have to solve reside in the minds of your public servants.

So the public servants brought to me this very serious problem of which they were aware, but of which there was very little action by the previous Government, and I say that because I just gave an account of how that diesel demand spiralled under the previous Government, under the PNM government. And I am not aware that in the period 2002—2010, when they were in office, I am not aware of any major interventions taking place as like what we are seeing taking place, Mr. President, under this administration in Sea Lots. I want to commend the police, especially Inspector Sahadeo Singh. [*Desk thumping*] I want to commend the police. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Member: "Cyah" [*Inaudible*] the PNM, they did nothing!

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: I want to commend the officers at NP, the Customs and Excise, and the Ministry of National Security.

Hon. Senator: [*Inaudible*] is criminal.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: The Minister of National Security is fully apprised of the situation, but in the last five months, Mr. President, we have had three raids in the Sea Lots area, and there have been other raids in Matura, in Claxton Bay, and there was another raid in the Sea Lots area during the state of emergency.

Hon. Senator: Al-Rawi was not even—

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: So in 2010, Mr. President, [*Crosstalk*] 669 litres of subsidized diesel. That is a lot of money. Dr. Mahabir, 669. In 2011; what happened to that number? That number fell to 587.2; a very significant decline.

[*Desk thumping*] That is 2011. In 2012, the number has come down again, 552.4 million. So we are seeing a reduction in the demand for subsidized diesel in Trinidad and Tobago to the tune of about 14 per cent compared to 2010.

Sen. George: And that is even though the car population is growing, "eh".

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Even though the car population in growing in Trinidad. That is because we have been able to make significant inroads in the trade in illegal diesel in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] That, Mr. President, of course, as I said, came about because we were able to bring together disparate elements of the public service to work together in tandem to make this happen.

Mr. President, that of course is, one, it is very difficult therefore to quantify, and I am sure somebody would like me to quantify what component of the subsidy is being frittered away by persons involved in this illegal trade. The Government of course at the level of legislation has increased the penalties under the various Acts: the Petroleum Act and the Petroleum Production Subsidy and Levy Act. Of course, you must first catch people.

The information coming to us is that persons who have been involved in the drug trade, because of the risk/reward dynamic with regard to the drug trade, are moving towards diesel because, of course, the penalty is not commensurate with the reward, and, of course, the information coming to us too, and I have discussed this with my colleague, Sen. the Hon. Gary Griffith, is that there is a nexus between the drug trade, the trade in guns and diesel, and illegal trawling. And I want to commend the Minister for banning trawling.

Hon. Senator: "They didn't have to geh the OPVs."

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Right. So even without the OPVs, Mr. President, we have been able to make a dent in that illegal trade in diesel.

Hon. Senator: [*Inaudible*] deal with amendments.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: So, Mr. President, it is difficult to say what component, as I said, of that 4.4 billion, but the Government has the resolve to tackle this issue.

Next year, Mr. President, we will operationalize the gantry at Caroni, which was a gantry which is connected to the Pointe-a-Pierre refinery by what we call a multi-fuel pipeline. Sen. George, when he was the Minister of Transport I took him on a tour of that facility. What we intend to do at the gantry in Caroni is

introduce a dye to dye, subsidized diesel that will allow for the identification, and this happens all over the word. It happens in the United Kingdom where farmers get subsidized diesel, and the average man does not get subsidized diesel. So we plan to introduce that dye at the gantry at Caroni. We looked at introducing that dye at the gantry in Pointe-a-Pierre, but the configuration there does not allow for that, and that will go some way to the whole tackling of this illegal trade in diesel.

So, Mr. President, I listened to Sen. Al-Rawi's contribution, and I must say it was not one of his better contributions. [*Laughter*] We have come to expect a certain standard from him, and I think what has happened to him, Mr. President, is that he probably got wind of the press release that was issued by his leader shortly before he spoke [*Crosstalk*] and he became secure. [*Laughter*] He felt very secure that his position in the Senate had not been jeopardized, and, of course, he [*Desk thumping*] lowered his standard, he lowered his standard.

Sen. Al-Rawi: At least we have press releases; we did not stand up [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Senator: You went down there?

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: He lowered his standard, Mr. President.

Sen. George: He lowered his standard. He lowered his standard.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: So he went on to give a discourse which was largely based on a *Hansard* contribution from 2008. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Your words. Your Prime Minister's words.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: He went on to give a discourse on the rapid rail [*Crosstalk*] but, Mr. President, the CNG project as envisaged by the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs and the NGC, as publicly announced at a post Cabinet press conference on June 27, 2013, cost proximately TT $500 million [*Desk thumping*] for phase one.

The much touted rapid rail which Sen. Al-Rawi promises to deliver in the unlikely event that they get back into Government, the feasibility study for that rapid rail, the pre-feasibility study—that is a study to determine if you should have a study—[*Interruption*]

Mr. President: Senator, we will have to hear more about that later, it is now 4.30 p.m. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] Senators, it is 4.30 p.m. and I intend to take the tea break at this point. We will resume at 5.00 p.m. This Senate is now suspended until 5.00 p.m.

4.30 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (RECOGNITION OF)

Mr. President: Before you resume, I did have an announcement to make. As most of you may be aware, today is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. So to honour that day, I invite Members of the Senate to make short submissions relative to joining with the international community in celebration of this day, on this occasion. Leader of Government Business.

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Mr. President, we heeded your request, and Sen. Raziah Ahmed will speak on behalf of the Government on that issue. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Sen. Ahmed.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development (Sen. The Hon. Raziah Ahmed): Thank you, Mr. President.

The Government of the People's Partnership under the leadership of the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar envisages a country where the quality of life enjoyed by all citizens sets the stage for a society characterized by the high virtues of peaceful coexistence, where access to goods and services are founded in equality of delivery and where our relationships are embedded in living practices of mindfulness, compassion and hope. Indeed, prosperity for all is our commitment, and our seven-pillar framework has been carefully engineered to feed this viable, sustainable development.

With this in mind, we join the United Nations to mark the recognition of International Day of Persons with Disabilities today, December 03, 2013. This year's theme, "Break Barriers, Open Doors: for an inclusive society and development for all", is the current vision borne out of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted in 2006 by the United Nations. Trinidad and Tobago became a signatory in 2007. It is in fact the first comprehensive human rights treaty of the 21st Century.

In his address to mark today's occasion, United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon pointed out that the national and international action to support disability inclusive development includes guaranteeing meaningful participation in processes that affect the rights and interests of persons with disabilities by providing an enabling environment.

On a regional note, we wish to report that Trinidad and Tobago is being represented at a Caricom high-level ministerial meeting on the rights of persons living with disabilities and special needs in Haiti this very week. Indeed, in the face of the immediate social threats emerging in our nation, as evidenced by the grim and horrendous newspaper reports in recent days, affecting innocent and helpless children, our Ministry has sent forward two technocrats to attend this ministerial meeting in Haiti, so that Ministers in the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development can remain here to tackle and confront the live issues as we continue to plan and seek to remedy every form of disadvantage and disparity within this social fabric.

May we pause to express our grief and sorrow over the unwarranted death of our babies of our nation in horrible circumstances, as our nation itself plummets into sadness in the spate of mindlessness that boils the blood of every loving mother and father in this nation of ours. Indeed, our attendance at the Haiti meeting under the Council for Human and Social Development is in keeping with the policy work that must go on at the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, that is putting together a national framework for children with disabilities and special needs, a work in progress.

This framework is intended to improve the system of support for children and youth with disabilities, special needs and for their families. This is in pursuance of implementing child development initiatives for children with disabilities and special needs, in the Cabinet-approved "National Strategic Plan for Child Development, 2012—2016".

Mr. President, disability is not easy to understand. It is actually a complex, multidimensional experience that can be conceptualized as a continuum from minor difficulties in functioning to events that impact a person's life in major ways. In developed countries, for example, people with disabilities are now defined as those having impairments in body function and structure, as well as those with limitations to physical, mental, participational and environmental factors.

We have seen a number of social and political movements over the years that impact persons with disabilities, such as normalization initiatives where the term "differently abled" was first coined. We have participated in the deinstitutionalization and are working towards mainstreaming and community integration.

The Government focuses on delivery as well as policy direction to improve the quality of life for persons with disabilities, and this includes a focus on balancing self-determination with risk; promoting leisure choices and self-

decision making skills; removing social, attitudinal and physical barriers; the development of information technology support and adaptations; the inclusion of special delivery education models; enhancing worker relations with employers, responding to the needs of seniors and our ageing; and includes in addition, seeking consensus on the core dimensions to quality living for all persons living with disability and their households and family members.

The overall aim is quality management in the delivery of services we engender and the meaningful alignment of public policy with the consensus of what constitutes quality living standards for persons with disabilities.

This must coordinate with the core values of compassion and mindfulness, with hope for a brighter and better future for all of our people, regardless of economic situation, culture or demographics. As we do this, we continue to evaluate the outcomes of public policy, to enshrine within the psyche of our people a desire to lift ourselves up by our own bootstraps and to help our neighbours climb out of any quagmire of confusion that has been created by our unique historical antecedents, societal, political and economic.

In fact, our focus on disability is not a focus on others. It is taking a good look at ourselves and how well we have provisioned in this honourable Senate for hon. Members who occupy this Senate, and what must be done almost immediately so that we can walk the talk.

Further, I wish to emphasize that there is a very real statistic coming out of the social security services in the US—in the US Social Security Administration—which estimates that three out of every 10 of today's 20-year-olds will suffer a disability before age 67. It is noteworthy that while as a society we are a resilient and fun loving people, who go about our daily lives without holding contempt for race, religion or economic characteristics, we work assiduously as a Government, because any disadvantaged soul in our land must have hope that the light at the end of the tunnel is within reach in our time because the Government under our hon. Prime Minister has the will and has taken ownership, that this change is ours and we rise, as with the rising sun, in a paradigm so well expressed by Rabindranath Tagore in a country where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection.

We are determined as a Government to make a positive difference because in the words of Nelson Mandela:

> "What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made in the lives of others that will determine the significance of the life we lead."

May I highlight the work being done by the Ministry of the People and Social Development and the many initiatives under that umbrella, as well as the Access T&T initiative, a publication of the Disability Affairs Unit of the Ministry of the People and Social Development, launched in July 2010. Also of note among others is the Tourism Development Company's recent special Braille edition of its *Historical Buildings in Port of Spain* book. This book is an initiative designed to increase awareness and participation by our disabled community. It serves to act as a guide and provides a wealth of practical and relevant information on accessible places in Trinidad and Tobago, shopping malls, hotels, guest houses, sporting and recreational facilities, to name a few. Working with the challenges is a tireless work, and we at the Ministry have been working with families in need at a rate that is phenomenal, Mr. President.

Our social service workers, our social workers in the National Family Planning Division, according to a preliminary report indicates that they are doing an average of six interventions per day for families in need.

So, as we commemorate all the special initiatives to mainstream full participation and quality life of all those who are more challenged than others, we urge those listening to recognize the unique power of the concept of self, and especially the concept of the ideal self that is created from images of a desired future, from the concept of hope and the sense of a core identity of who we are as individuals and as a people. It is this idea of the ideal self that gives us a personal vision of what we can do despite our limits. A personal vision of how we can break barriers and open doors for an inclusive society and the development of all.

In closing, let us remember the words of the African leader, Nelson Mandela when he said that:

> "There is no passion to be found playing small—in settling for a life that is less than one you are capable of living."

We are one, a great people. We will help each other. We will rise with the sun and climb over the hurdles. We will rise.

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

5.15 p.m.

Sen. Pennelope Beckles: Thank you kindly, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. President, I am mindful that you did say brief comments, but—[*Laughter*]

Hon Senator: Speak, ma'am, speak.

Sen. P. Beckles: Mr. President, as we have been asked by the hon. President of the country to recognize this day in the Senate, I would like to join with the Government and certainly the Independent Senators in recognizing this International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and the theme being "Break Barriers, Open Doors: for an inclusive society and development for all".

Mr. President, over one billion people or approximately 15 per cent of the world's population live with some form of disabilities. As it relates to Trinidad and Tobago, there was a document prepared by Nicole Henry of the University of the West Indies, Faculty of Social Sciences, and in reference to the 2000 population census, they indicated that 4.5 per cent of Trinidad's population is categorized as disabled and there is almost an equal number of males and females with disabilities. The document went on to say, however, significantly more visually impaired females than males and significantly more males with a behavioural disability than females. The majority of persons with disabilities is 45.4 per cent within the ages of 45—49 and 59—74 age brackets. A significant amount of the working population is still at working age, 29 per cent; 17 per cent of disabled persons are between the ages of 15—34. The majority of persons with disabilities were either African, 39 per cent; or East Indian, 41 per cent; and 45 per cent of those who answered were either in marriage or in common law relationships.

So, Mr. President, we do know that the United Nations from time to time recognizes, they have various days, very soon we will have the day for human rights as well as for the last couple of days, they are recognizing the International Day against Violence against Women [*sic*]. But I cannot recall whether or not this particular day was a day that the Senate may have recognized before, so I think it is a very fitting way for us to pay tribute, and we know that today there was another person that the President appointed with a disability and we recognize that it is significant for us in the Senate that, today in particular, as we have had two persons who have been so appointed.

I think for us, we need to—it allows us to be a little more conscious and sensitive, and we know that we are fortunate that this particular building has had a lift. In the last Parliament, as you know, Mr. President, it would have been very difficult for them to enter, because when we had the last opening of the Parliament, actually, a former Member of Parliament had to be lifted to be brought into the Public Gallery. But what is more important for us as a country, I think is for us to recognize that you can tell a lot about a country when you look at how we treat persons with disabilities, and I think in particular our elders, our

pensioners and, you know, our senior citizens. And there are some—whilst we have the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, they look really at how you implement the convention.

I would like to say in this short time I have, speaking on this matter that there are very simple things that we could do that do not always need legislation. Because from time to time, we feel that all the problems that we have to solve in a country have to do with legislation, and I believe one of the areas that we have to look at very closely is the area of allowing much easier access for persons with disabilities as we construct buildings. And it may be very interesting if I had to make any recommendation for the Minister of Planning to look very closely at a policy that insists that all buildings that are being constructed from 2014 onwards should have all the infrastructural facilities to ensure that persons with disabilities could have much easier access.

Now my colleague Sen. Hinds attended the church service that was organized today for the persons with disabilities that was held at St. Theresa Roman Catholic Church in Woodbrook, and I know that the persons attended specifically asked that certain things be raised and, of course, we have spoken and I want to just make sure that they having asked him to raise, that I just want to raise a couple of the things that they discussed with him today. Of course, they recognized George Daniel who is now deceased, as one of the pioneers and one of the persons, one of the leaders who really continuously and regularly raised and sensitized the public about the persons with disabilities. He was an activist.

They raised with him the issue of housing and the challenges still faced by persons with disabilities and there was a policy some time ago that in every housing development there should at least be five houses for persons with disabilities. And he mentioned to me a case of one Stacy Ann Parris of Gatacre Street who gave him permission that her name be called in the Parliament because she is a poet by profession and she has been under tremendous pressure as a disabled person, and is presently being threatened with eviction. I know that the Minister of Social Development has been very active in his assistance to such persons and on behalf, Sen. Hinds asked me that is one of the cases that we are asking specifically that the Government looks into. But as it relates to public facilities, schools and many other institutions, the persons with disabilities simply cannot access these facilities.

The last thing, of course, would be that we do not only talk about these things on the day that it is celebrated, but it should be something that we should think about on a regular and consistent basis. [*Desk thumping*] You know, there is a young man called Kyron James, he is now a councillor in the Mayaro district.

Hon. Senator: That is right. That is right. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. P. Beckles: You know, he won his seat and it was not a very—I mean, I know it was not an easy thing for him. He is a person with a disability, you know, and I think for all of us, we were really very glad and proud, not only that he offered himself, but that the constituents in the Mayaro region were willing to give him the opportunity to serve, and I certainly want to wish him the best. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, I had the opportunity, just recently I attended the Commonwealth People's Forum in Sri Lanka and at the end of that, there was a document that was prepared and one of the documents dealing—one of the recommendations dealing specifically with small states where they talked about the issue of minority rights and they recommended as one of the proposals, and that is at 3(b), and they called upon we the people of the Commonwealth at the 2013 Commonwealth People's Forum in Hikkaduwa, Sri Lanka, specifically asked that they:

> "Recognise and promote the economic, social and political empowerment of disabled"—persons—"by ratifying and implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol backed by the allocation of appropriate resources;"

So we know that even as late as the recent Commonwealth forum that this was a matter being addressed. But, of course, it is not just a question of addressing the issue, it is that when we have these conferences and the Commonwealth meets, that when the Commonwealth meets next is to do the assessment and do the analysis and see how we have really moved forward, how we have accepted the recommendations and how the persons with disabilities, whether or not we can see improvements.

Mr. President, I am not likely to speak on the other Motion so I would ask you kindly if you would allow me, please, to simply, as this is my last day in the Senate, to express my thanks to you, the President of the Senate, and all my other colleagues [*Desk thumping*] for the opportunity I have had to serve. [*Interruption*]

I want, first of all, Mr. President, to recognize the manner in which you have conducted the affairs of the Senate. I have had the opportunity to be—this is not my first time in the Senate. I was here during the period 1995—1998 and I want to say that it has been a pleasure working with you and experiencing the manner in which you have conducted affairs and the way in which you have kept the proceedings—tight but at the same time, that you have allowed persons the flexibility to speak freely and I think a lot of us have been able, not just to develop

our skills, but to understand the approach that you have taken that has allowed the Senate to continue to have the reputation, I think, as one of the best places for young politicians, in particular, to develop and to understand the significance of the Senate being a place that is much different from the House, both in terms of our research, the quality of the debates and I just want to wish you the best as you continue to serve in that very distinguished position of being the President of the Senate.

I want to thank, of course, all my colleagues. The Leader of Government Business with whom I have had a good relationship and I have been able at all times whenever we have had matters to discuss, that he has been very forthright in terms of us discussing matters and trying to work in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And to all my colleagues on the Government Benches and, of course, the Independent Senators as well, who, from my experience, bring to bear very often a totally different approach, and on many Bills have been willing and prepared to stand their ground and to speak their mind even at the expense, at times, of being accused of being political.

I want to just say thanks, of course, to Sen. Ramkhelawan who is now the leader on the Independent Benches, as well as all the other Members of the Independent Benches. And, of course, to my own colleagues on the Opposition Bench, I know Sen. Hinds is going to be joining me in that he would not be here, but I am sure he would probably, at some point in time, extend his own courtesies for the time that he has served, but I want to thank them for the support, the tremendous support. [*Desk thumping*]

And, of course, to the staff of the Parliament who certainly make your life a lot easier in terms of their efficiency and the way in which they have always been very willing to assist and ensure that your research, your papers, that you have everything that is needed so that you too can contribute and be as effective as possible.

At the end of the day, Mr. President, I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in the Senate. [*Desk thumping*] I want to thank, of course, the political leader and Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Keith Rowley, for having appointed me and given me the opportunity to serve in this very distinguished position as Leader of the Opposition Business in the Senate. I am quite satisfied that I have done my best and I will continue to do my best in the interest of my party, the People's National Movement, and the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you kindly. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: Well said.

Sen. Hugh Russell Ian Roach: Mr. President, good afternoon. [*Desk thumping*] I thank you for the opportunity this afternoon to make a short comment commemorating this very important day which is designated by the United Nations to be the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Let me start by saying first of all that the souls, the heart, the dignity and integrity of disabled persons as human beings are alive and not disabled. The theme of today's observance according to the United Nations is "Break Barriers, Open Doors: for an inclusive society and development for all". And I wish to quote from today's website of the United Nations which is entitled "enable", posted on December 03, 2013, which Sen. Beckles just made mention to, and Sen. Ahmed, that according to the United Nations estimation, over one billion people or approximately 15 per cent of the world's population live with some form of disability.

5.30 p.m.

Sen. Beckles said a study that was done by the University of the West Indies—I think she said—was about 4 per cent of Trinidadians and Tobagonians are disabled. If we go by the United Nations estimate of all nations being at least 15 per cent of their population, that is about 195,000 persons in Trinidad and Tobago may be so disabled, which is not insignificant.

Around the world persons with disabilities, as we are told—and I am beginning to experience, and I am sure my colleague, Sen. Singh, may be able to say something on it as well, personally—face physical, social, economic and additional barriers that exclude them from participating in a real way in meaningful activities in their society. They are disproportionately represented among the world's poorest and lack equal access to basic resources, such as education, employment, health care and social and legal support systems, as well as have a higher rate of mortality.

In spite of this situation, disability has remained visibly legally unattended to and visibly we remain largely invisible in the mainstream development agenda and for its purposes.

The Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, in his address for today, and I quote. He said:

> "We must remove all barriers that affect the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in society, including through changing attitudes that fuel stigma and institutionalize discrimination."

He said:

"We need to work harder to ensure that infrastructure and services support inclusive, equitable and sustainable development for all."

His statements underscore what is more intrinsic in our Constitution that declares the right to equality of treatment for all, and not just the able-bodied citizens of our beloved nation.

We cannot claim to be a progressive and inclusive society if we do not assume the struggle of the disabled as our own. We must have a clear conviction that whatever the citizens' physical or mental disability is, we are all part of a great nation whose strength lies in its diversity and motivated by a common destiny to improving the well-being and prosperity for all. Significantly, what is noticeable in our society is that there is a lack of sensitivity that is pervasive—it would seem—to the plights of disabled persons.

I had been appointed a temporary Senator a couple months ago before being made a permanent Senator on August 02, 2013, and during that short stint as an Independent Senator, I have had the unpleasant experience of listening on the radio to hear a commentator—I think it was Dale Enoch—on one programme, castigating me and saying that the President appointed a disabled person, basically, and he cannot even stay around to take a vote. I think this was the debate on the Municipal Act. His co-host, Tony Lee, sort of intervened—he seemed to be the wiser of the two—and indicated that, "Do you remember that Sen. Roach has a disability and that should be a given—[*Desk thumping*]—and his remarks were, "Listen to me, if he is appointed and he can't do it, then he shouldn't be there".

Now, if you think that was horrible enough, some couple weeks later on, there was Max Cuffie, a very respected columnist, I think, in one of the daily newspapers—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: "He not respected but he is a columnist."

Hon. Senator: Yeah.

Sen. H.R.I. Roach: He is a columnist. There we go. But you would know better than I do. But he, in an article, in taking issue with the President's appointment of four Senators and removing four Senators, which is, I believe, his constitutional right to do, he went on to say that if the President was really interested in having a disabled person represented in the highest Chamber of our Parliament he should have appointed somebody who was probably disabled for a

long time. So I did not realize there was a qualification in terms of the time spent being disabled that will make you a fit person to be in these Chambers. That was a dark day, and coming from somebody who, I think, would have been enlightened, having gone to Harvard.

Sen. Singh: Na, he took a short course.

Sen. H.R.I. Roach: You see.

Sen. Singh: [*Inaudible*] by GISL.

Sen. H.R.I. Roach: And, Mr. President, without trying to be dramatic but, indeed, needs to be told, yesterday, in the *Trinidad Express*—sorry, December 01, Mr. Keith Subero, in his article, again seeming to attack the Government and the Head of the State—and I read:

> "I heard myself saying in an uncharacteristic outburst last week: 'Everything this Government touches turn sour. What is not sour begins to smell!'"

He goes on later on and says:

> "But it was also the letter, written by former UWI registrar, Jeremy Callaghan in the Express of November 28 that made me realise that we are in a state of anxiety—one of dread and distress. All our institutions are either sour or smelling."

Then I would skip and go on. He goes to say:

> "Let's start with the top. The President, obviously attempting to place his particular brand on the office, removes four Senators who are among the strongest on the Independent bench, and then makes uncomplimentary remarks about 'recycled plastic bottles'.
>
> Now, because of physical challenges, one of his replacements cannot sit through Parliament's lengthy sessions. Consequently, the Independent bench at times is short of its full complement."

Now, this is coming from somebody who is supposed to be an enlightened person, somebody who writes to enlighten the general public out there, and he is making such an outrageous, such an insensitive, such a debase—I mean, it is dehumanizing to pick on a disabled person, not because it is me; I take no personal umbrage to it—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: But it is not even true.

Sen. H.R.I. Roach: Exactly. It is not even true. But it goes to show the pervasive lack or ignorance that exists in our society that needs to be rectified and rectified ASAP. [*Desk thumping*]

I am not one who ever intends to use these esteemed Chambers to derogate, to defame in any way anybody's character in the general public without having an opportunity to represent themselves, but I take great distaste in the fact that you have these three public figures who use mass media to say insensitive things like this about persons who are disabled. I certainly did not, on any day, in any moment in time, go in the store and purchased disability.

He might find himself at this point in time an abled person. I was an abled person two years, so I do not know if Max Cuffie will qualify me as being ably qualified to be a disabled person in the Chambers now. I do not know.

Hon. Senator: Call on them to withdraw it.

Sen. H.R.I. Roach: Pardon me?

Hon. Senator: Let them withdraw their statement.

Sen. H.R.I. Roach: And I am certain that Dr. Singh who seems to have been a disabled person longer than I have been, would have experienced the anguish in not being able to live and participate, in as many things he would have done as an able-bodied person before this unfortunate circumstance befell him.

Therefore, today is a day of significance for our society. [*Desk thumping*] It is a day of significance to allow us, as fellow human beings, whether abled or disabled, to join forces to focus and to be able to identify and clarify, and act with urgency in addressing the shortcomings of our society in catering for those less fortunate persons, especially the disabled.

It is not a glorious moment for me to sit here and not be able to do the things that I would like to do. I would like to be able to get up and go to the bathroom, as my fellow Senators would do from time to time. My getting up from here, or my fellow Sen. Singh to do the same, creates a stir. We have to be assisted and, to some extent, it would cause some inconvenience to the proceedings in the Parliament.

So when you have people saying these kinds of things without checking themselves and understanding the complexity, as Sen. Ahmed said, of disability—disability is a very complex thing. You may see me physically disabled here, but it has a mental, it has an emotional, it has a financial, it has family consequences, it has community consequences, it has significant consequences. [*Desk thumping*]

Therefore, I will beg the Government—this Government which seems, as I said on the last occasion—seems to be a Government that listens—that the plight of the disabled in this society is one that is crying out for assistance. We need to do things and part from the rhetoric and become active, and activated and

actualize what needs to be done. There are simple things that can be done, as the Senator said, without the need of passing of legislation. You just have to have the political will to do it. I am experiencing—I am watching day by day for the last week, they are constructing a pavement on Long Circular, coming from Saddle Road, from Maraval, to go all around to Long Circular proper, in St. James, and I am looking to see where is going to be the ramps to allow a disabled person to go, and I have seen none.

You have to be a hurdler to get on top of it. You have to be very skilled in your wheelchair to be able to jump on that and jump down. And I am thinking about all these things going on there, and it is in that haste the pavement is being erected. There are so many places that we go and we look and there is no access to, public or otherwise.

After two years of paralysis, last week Tuesday was the first I went to the Court of Appeal to appear, again, as an advocate. And, yes, to some extent I was able to get in there, but in order for me to access the bench to sit at the bar I had to be lifted by my colleagues to get there and to get back. So there is no adequate accommodation for me, even for me to practise my profession.

Sen. Al-Rawi: The highest court of the land.

Sen. H.R.I. Roach: At the highest court of the land. My mind is not disabled. I am physically disabled—partially physically disabled. I hope and I pray daily that that would be reversed, but that is in the hands of God. [*Desk thumping*] But in the meantime, I am a person—like many other persons—who is willing to live with dignity, be self-sufficient, be independent, provide for my family, provide for my friends and engage in normal human activities.

So today, I hope that it serves as an opportunity for us to spare a moment and think about how we can change our process of thinking, how we view, as persons who are disabled, in trying to make their life a more pleasant life and how we can open opportunities to have them more inclusive rather than excluded from participating in what is your right as a citizen in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its optional protocol has been signed but not yet ratified by our Government. I think Sen. Beckles was making comments on that. I beg that it be addressed as soon as possible. It will take us from the state of being rhetorical to a state of actual commitment.

In closing, Mr. President, I feel privileged to be able to contribute to the extent I am able to contribute to our society. I did not choose to be in elective politics, like my colleagues—some of them on the other side who I think have a lot of will and stamina—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Guts.

Sen. H.R.I. Roach: And guts, and heart to engage in this type of politics because sometimes it seems from the periphery to be one that is not nourished with gratitude by those at large. It is very easy when those who are doing, for people to look upon and to criticize, but for them themselves who are the critics, to come and do something, you do not see them.

Hon. Senator: Indeed. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. H.R.I. Roach: We are not perfect. We are all not perfect people, but we seek perfection. We seek to better what we do every day, and I hope today, if anything at all will be achieved, that some level of meaningful sensibility will come among our population in understanding that disability is not a disease; it is not something somebody chooses upon themselves or their family, and that anybody at any point in time can become disabled, be it mentally, physically or otherwise.

To quote my grandmother, she used to say: "What eh miss yuh, eh pass yuh". [*Desk thumping*] And until you die, anything is possible.

With that, Mr. President, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

5.45 p.m.

Mr. President: Sen. Singh?

Sen. Dr. Kriyaan Singh: [*Desk thumping*] Good afternoon, hon. President. At first, I would just like to thank everyone for having me here today, and it is indeed very humbling to be recognized and considered as someone worthy and capable of such an undertaking. Before I continue with my speech, I would just like to point out, well add to what he said, and I think that what these three journalists should realize is that, with Mr. Roach being paralyzed for two years and confined to a wheelchair for two years, and myself being paralyzed for seven and a half years and confined to a wheelchair for seven and a half years, we both together may be the most qualified people here to sit for long periods. [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Well said. Well said.

Sen. Hinds: Well "putted". Well "putted".

Sen. Dr. K. Singh: As a person with a physical disability, I seek to facilitate the upliftment of the disabled population of Trinidad and Tobago and to bring their concerns to the forefront.

In a young and blossoming society like beautiful Trinidad and Tobago, we boast of a multicultural and all inclusive society, but under closer scrutiny, we must admit that we are falling short when it comes to the disabled population. For too long the disabled, both mentally and physically challenged, have been shunned and stigmatized by society. We, and I include myself as part of the disabled population, proudly, have been relegated to the back seat as burdens of society, who cannot live a fulfilling life and contribute to the meaningful development of our nation.

It is critical at this turning point in our country's future that we pay emphasis on educating our nation about the disabled, what it means to be disabled and that above all, we are humans equally capable, if not at times, more capable of contributing to our society. [*Desk thumping*]

It must be further recognized that any burden placed on society by the disabled is as a result of society making basic resources inaccessible to them.

Sen. Al-Rawi: That is right.

Sen. Dr. K. Singh: We must recognize that no disabled person chose to be disabled, nor does any disabled person want to be dependent on others. What the disabled want is not pity, but respect as equal members of society, and inclusion. [*Desk thumping*]

It is time we educate our nation about mental disabilities and illness, and remove the common, "he gone to St. Ann's" or "he was in the madhouse", rhetoric. As an educated forward-thinking society, we must break away from looking at persons with mental disabilities, as possessed by some demon requiring exorcism or "jharaying", or as under the curse of the obeah man. It is only through proper education can the views of the public be broadened to understand these conditions and recognize that despite their limitations, they are still able to live full lives, acquire education and employment in society.

How many of us can truly say we know what it is like to have a physical disability? I will be honest, before my accident I never once considered what life would be like in a wheelchair. I would never know physically, mentally and emotionally challenging each day how it would be, and it is unfortunate that for many of us, only through experience, would we fully appreciate the rigours of the daily routine of the physically challenged.

In recognition of International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the Edge Hill University in the United Kingdom has launched a Wheels 4 All programme, where it is offering wheelchair school tours, whereby non-wheelchair users are given the opportunity to live an entire day in the wheelchair, to better appreciate

the challenges faced by the physically disabled. We must remind ourselves that our health is not infallible, and that with age, we will all at some point in time become physically challenged to some degree. It is when we realize that in a split second, that person in the wheelchair, or that person missing a limb, or that blind person could be us, is when we begin to understand the importance of equality and inclusion for the disabled. And we must ask ourselves: what does equality and inclusion for the disabled mean?

Before I go any further, Mr. President, I as a disabled member of society, being disabled for the past seven and a half years, would like to publicly thank both the current and previous administrations for all that has been done to improve the accessibility of our nation to the disabled, but this must be only the beginning spark of an explosion to come. I would also like to say that although as a society, we are falling short, from personal experiences, there are many citizens who go out of their way to extend a helping hand to the disabled, and I must commend them for doing so. It has not gone unrecognized or unappreciated. What I am saying is that we must take the seed of compassion that is scattered loosely in our society and water it and nurture it, so that we will blossom into a nation that truly empowers and enables the disabled.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Well said.

Sen. Dr. K. Singh: Back to what does disability and inclusion for the disabled mean. Sorry, equality and inclusion for the disabled mean. It is not simply a matter of our own toilet facilities with a bigger door and parking spaces closer to the door of the building. It refers to the access of proper education of equal standards for the disabled, as for the able-bodied, where required, special education and facilitated learning for the mentally disabled which allows them to reach their full scholastic potential should be available. A sound education will allow the disabled to better secure meaningful employment later on in life and move one step closer to becoming independent. Vocational training and skill training must not be only offered but also be easily accessible in all communities, eliminating the need for the disabled student to travel from Toco to San Fernando to attend school for the disabled.

In the United Kingdom, many skilled courses offered to the general public have been tailored to include the disabled and, in doing so, have been proven to be more efficient and productive to the applicants. This could simply be explained by a disabled person's ability to do the same work with less physical ability.

Locally, I would like to highlight the work of such organizations like the National Centre for Persons with Disabilities in San Fernando for their remarkable work in teaching and training students, not only in the academic field, but also in woodwork, culinary arts, sewing, agriculture and computer studies,

just to name a few. More institutions like this need to be established nationwide, including the sister isle of Tobago. In ensuring accessibility to public places for the disabled, we must consider proper walkways, ramps, entrance widths for doorways, sloping curbs for wheelchairs and recognizable terrain curbs for the blind. The current bane of my existence is that at PriceSmart shopping complex in La Romain, there is an escalator for trolleys and able-bodied persons, but for wheelchair users and elderly citizens who are afraid to use the escalator, there is a 200-foot long, 35 degree angled ramp into the building. Now is that truly accessibility for the disabled? Think about that.

Accessible toilet facilities with sufficient space for wheelchair users, or users and their caregivers with proper safety rails should become standard in all new buildings, and having said this, there needs to be an establishment of a proper building code and requirements for considering buildings as accessible buildings. I would like to highlight an experience I myself had on going to a local "cinemaplex", and on entering the bathroom I was happy to see a handicap stall. However, I was soon disappointed to realize that although the stall was fully equipped and roomy enough inside, the door width of the stall was four inches too small to allow a wheelchair to enter. What was more confusing was that the door width was even narrower than a normal door width in the other stalls. There should be an allotted time frame in which existing public buildings are required to modify their facilities, as well as to accommodate the disabled.

On the topic of handicap parking spots, not much is needed to be said. It is a sheer matter of consideration of your fellowmen and putting the needs of others before your own. One must appreciate that handicap parking spots are closer to facilitate persons whose disability limits their mobility, but also they are wider to facilitate access in and out of vehicles, with wheelchairs, walkers or crutches. There is need for legislation to ensure handicap parking is provided at all public parking lots, but also provision of a method of identification for handicap users to ensure that these spots are limited to their use.

Penalties should also be put in place for persons abusing the handicap spots, as well as persons blocking access ways to wheelchair ramps and curbs. Places of recreation such as beaches, parks, gyms and sporting facilities should also be made accessible to the disabled. I myself am aware of the extensive work being done at Maracas Beach and the Chaguaramas Boardwalk to ensure it is wheelchair accessible. There has even been the launch of beach wheelchair project at Maracas Beach. Myself, to go on the beach, I bought an ATV just so that I will move from my wheelchair onto the ATV so that I could drive straight into

the water because I love the beach. All right? However, I would like to point out again, that in labelling a place accessible, we must ensure that it truly is. At the start of the wheelchair part at Maracas Beach, there is a drain which is difficult for a person in a wheelchair to maneuver on their own. Furthermore, although these beaches are accessible by public transport, many of the wheelchair accessible buses do not frequent these locations.

The inclusion of elevators and lifts into multi-storey buildings and signs labelled in Braille also need to be introduced in the building codes. The disabled must be included and equally considered in all fields of employment. Recommendations should be made to employers to allot consideration for disabled workers.

I myself have heard of persons with disabilities, who have applied with their resumés for jobs and have been called in for interviews, and on arrival, turned away because they had not mentioned in their resumé that they were physically challenged. This must no longer be the case. Employers should assess disabled applicants and their abilities, and not restrict their considerations to their disability unless it truly affects the job. In cases where employees have lost their jobs after becoming disabled, employers should be required to make sufficient attempts to facilitate and accommodate the disabled worker, to enable them to carry out the job in the same capacity as they previously did.

I would like to recognize the many disabled graduates of tertiary level education who have achieved successful employment despite their disabilities, and commend their employers on allowing them to do so. I myself, although graduating with my veterinary degree exactly one year before becoming permanently paralyzed, from the chest down, have recently discovered some of the challenges faced by the disabled community in acquiring proper employment opportunities. I have sought to become certified by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons of the United Kingdom, that by law, do not allow persons confined to wheelchairs to enter and graduate in the field of veterinary medicine. However, I am pleased to announce that after consultation with their examining board on several occasions, I am being allowed to do the accreditation exam but with no special considerations to my disability. [*Desk thumping*] Hopefully in the coming year, I will soon be the first veterinarian worldwide and proud Trinidadian in a wheelchair to be UK certified. [*Desk thumping*]

Inclusion also entails ensuring that persons with disabilities receive proper physical and occupational therapy. Physical therapy concerns the remediation of impairments and disabilities and the promotion of mobility functional ability and

quality of life. Occupational therapy is the use of treatments to develop, recover or maintain the daily living and work skills of people with a physical, mental or developmental condition.

Again, speaking from my own personal experience, seven years ago on becoming disabled, these are two more modalities that are severely lacking in our nation's health care system. Patients with physical disabilities are usually relegated to outdated, underequipped and insufficiently staffed facilities such as St. James Infirmary, where little to nothing is done to ensure the person's recovery and reintegration into normalcy. Persons who have become disabled are left under depressing conditions at a time when depression is already getting the better of them.

6.00 p.m.

There needs to be more emphasis placed on the importance and establishment of a proper occupational therapy department in the health care system as well, and therapists have to be valued for their crucial role in reestablishing the lives of many disabled persons and reintegrating them back into their jobs and daily routines. Social and psychological support also need to be made readily accessible to the disabled population as well as their families.

Dealing with the stresses of living with a disability, as well as facing the inaccessibility of equality of rights for the disabled, can be very emotionally unnerving, both for the disabled and their supporters. I myself would like to recognize the immense and never-ending support I have received from my parents, family, friends, well-wishers and the community at large, throughout my tenuous time with which I would not be in this honourable position today. I urge parents of disabled children to continue to give wholeheartedly of yourself; I urge communities to come together and embrace your disabled members, and give them support and encouragement. As a nation, we must break the barriers and open the doors to allow disabled persons to become closer and closer to being fully independent citizens.

Disability grants should be reassessed and given to all citizens with permanent disabilities, and not limited to disabled persons who are unemployed and living below a certain economic level. It should not be treated as a poor relief or welfare grant. It should be noted that the daily expenses for a person with a disability is three to five times more than that of an able-bodied person, depending on their disability. It should be remembered that to be disabled is not equivalent to being poor. More accessible housing should also be provided for the disabled and subsidies for equipment such as bathroom chairs, ramps, lifts and railings [*Desk thumping*] should be allocated by the relevant Ministries. A national scholarship should also be set aside for disabled students.

Finally, there needs to be inclusion of the disabled in all aspects of society especially in those directly affecting them. When laws, guidelines and recommendations for disabled facilities and accessibility are discussed, they should be done with thorough consultation with members of the disabled community. I applaud the inclusion of Mr. Roach and myself in the Senate and hope that this is the beginning of inclusion of the disabled in many more Government and decision-making posts.

In closing, Mr. President, I would like to thank you all for your attention. I always dreamed of one day being able to better my country and saw my passion for animals and veterinary medicine as my means of doing so, but I never imagined I would be given such an opportunity as this and would be doing so from a wheelchair. [*Desk thumping*] It is indeed an honour and a privilege to serve the people of Trinidad and Tobago in this capacity, and I promise to do so to the best of my ability, not my disability. [*Desk thumping*] I would like to remind everyone that there is nothing you cannot do because of a disability, you just have to figure out how to do it differently. [*Desk thumping*] Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, I, too, wish to join with those who have gone before me, together with the international community, in commemorating this day which recognizes the persons with disabilities. In so doing, this Parliament has the opportunity to promote awareness of and advocating for the inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society as Senators before me have so wonderfully done.

As you have mentioned, we have to work together to change the attitudes and break down barriers to ensure opportunities for the full inclusion and participation of all, even those with disabilities within all sectors of our society. I believe that as a nation, Trinidad and Tobago has already embarked upon establishing a holistic framework for achieving the goals of social inclusion and equality of opportunity for all citizens with disabilities upon the creation of the National Policy on Persons with Disabilities.

As an institution, the Parliament has also been given the opportunity to put into practice some of these ideals with the appointment of an independent Senator with a disability to one of the highest offices in the land, the Senate, on the Tenth Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago at the opening of the Fourth Session on August 02, 2013. Additionally, earlier today, another temporary Senator with disabilities took and subscribed to the oath.

It is heartening to know that in 2012, the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards embarked upon a project to formulate accessibility requirements relative to our environment. Successful implementation of this project will see buildings in Trinidad and Tobago outfitted with the necessary infrastructure needed for making our buildings more accessible to persons with disabilities. Furthermore, there is a dedicated bus service with buses outfitted with special features to aid persons with disabilities in getting around Trinidad and Tobago. Thus, I think Trinidad and Tobago is on its way to putting its disability inclusive strategies into action, to break down barriers and create equal opportunities for all. The aim: to produce a society where everyone's rights are protected, opportunities are supported and no one is left out.

I would like to highlight the fact that the work of persons with disabilities enriches our nation contributing to the work of Government and serving as a model for all of us. Let us remember that disabilities do not discriminate. Any one of us could join this community in an instant. Certainly, most able-bodied persons would fear such a change, but there are examples among us to show that you can live with a disability and still make profound and lasting contribution to your neighbours, your community and your country.

As I was listening to Dr. Singh, it reminded me that my daughter, studying for her clinicals in occupational therapy, had been required to, as part of her therapy, to have a wheelchair and occupy it for an entire day in the mall, and at the end of that day, she had become more sensitive to the needs of the disabled community, and perhaps, that is something we could emulate in some of our institutions. And as part of that, of course, she became more thankful for the blessings that she did in fact have, so the goals, I think, were achieved in many different directions.

Spreading that message, that knowledge, is our goal and when we do, we will incorporate more people with disabilities in our places of employment, in our social organizations and our everyday activities. Today, the occasion of International Day of Persons with Disabilities is just another step to achieving the goal of inclusion of all.

Finally, just may I thank Sen. Beckles for her kind remarks and to take this opportunity to wish herself and Sen. Hinds all the very best in their endeavours. [*Desk thumping*] I am sure that they will go on to expend their considerable talents and energies towards furthering the development of Trinidad and Tobago, and on behalf of the Senate, I am sure that we wish you well.

And so, at the end of this day, as we commemorate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, I am sure that we have brought that message home and we thank the two Senators, in particular, who suffer from some disability for their contributions today. [*Desk thumping*]

EXCISE DUTY (COMPRESSED NATURAL GAS) ORDER, 2013

Mr. President: At this point, I propose that we resume the debate that we had earlier. Senator—the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs was on his legs at the time, and by my estimation, he has another 30 minutes of original time.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Things are restored. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Thank you very much, Mr. President. After hearing such enlightening contributions from our colleagues in this Senate, it is very difficult to return to the mood that I was in at 4.30 p.m. [*Crosstalk*] But, Mr. President, one must do one's duty and—[*Interruption*]

Sen. George: Ahhhh! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: While, of course, listening to the contributions on the issue of disability, I reflected on the life of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, you know, who was in a wheelchair for all of World War II and led America through its darkest days to victory, and that to me is a testament to the human spirit—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Well said!

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—and what disabled persons could do. So, Mr. President, after that very enlightening session, let us return to compressed natural gas.

Sen. George: Mundane!

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: The mundane issue of compressed natural gas. We had before us a Motion dealing with the Excise (General Provisions) Act as it relates to the Compressed Natural Gas Order, 2013. We had left off—we were speaking about the various options. In fact, many options had been put forward to Trinidad and Tobago as regards the solution to the issue of the subsidy, and I had given some information about the subsidy and the quantum of moneys that this country has to put out.

Sen. Mahabir pointed out that it is now approaching almost 10 per cent of Government revenue going into the subsidization of liquid fuels, and, of course, as an enlightened people, as an enlightened Government, as an enlightened Parliament, we may be thinking: is there a better use for that money? Could that money be used to retrofit public buildings to accommodate disabled persons and so on? Could that money be used to build more roads, schools and hospitals? I will just give an idea of how that subsidy is disaggregated.

The largest item in that $4.4 billion, 52 per cent of that money—of that $4.4 billion—goes towards the subsidization of diesel and the subsidy per litre of diesel is $4.12. So it means that $1.50 is the price you pay at the pump and the subsidy per litre is $4.12 on top of that, so that takes you to $5.62 per litre of diesel.

The other major component of the subsidy, Mr. President, is super gasoline, or as they call it: R-O-N, RON 92 which stands for Research Octane Number 92, and that accounts for 44 per cent of the subsidy. So 52 per cent being diesel, 44 per cent being super gasoline and the subsidy—we pay $2.70 per litre at the pump for super gasoline, the subsidy per litre on that is $3.13 per litre, so therefore there is less subsidy, of course, on super gasoline. There is also a small—although we pay $5.75 per litre for premium gasoline or RON 95, there is still a small subsidy on that of 61 cents per litre. Of course, those figures vary according to international oil prices. Yes, we still do have regular gasoline in Trinidad and Tobago. It is used by some fishing communities and so on, I understand, and, of course, kerosene is also subsidized and that takes up a very small component of our subsidy, 0.64 per cent.

So diesel and super gasoline are the big ticket items in the subsidy and that is from a money point of view. From a volume point of view, diesel accounts for 44.8 per cent of total amount of volume of fuels that we use in Trinidad and Tobago, and super, 49.56 per cent or, let us say, 50 per cent. So those are your two big ticket items in the subsidy—diesel and super—and most people in Trinidad and Tobago, at some point in time, use either one of those fuels.

Now, the point I also want to make, Mr. President, is that it should be considered that some of the largest users of diesel in Trinidad and Tobago are people with large fleets, and I am talking about people with large construction companies, large distribution companies and so on. And, of course, those companies, when they recognize their profits at the end of their financial year, built into their profits, Mr. Speaker—Mr. President—maybe I am anticipating too much. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

6.15 p.m.

Built into that profit margin of course, is the subsidy that the Government pays on diesel. So it is an issue which has been around for a long time, and we have introduced CNG in this country now since the year 1984. CNG was introduced in the year 1984, and I remember speaking to the late Kelvin Ramnath who was, at one point in time, a Minister of Energy in this country between 1987

and 1988, and he told me that the former Minister of Energy, the Minister before him, had converted his car to CNG. And that was the current Member of Parliament for San Fernando East, Mr. Patrick Manning, a much forgotten man in the PNM stratosphere, PNM realm.

Hon. Senator: Speak for "yuhself".

Sen. Cudjoe: "Doh worry bout the PNM."

Sen. Al-Rawi: Speak for "yuhself"!

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Mr. Manning had converted, I am advised, his 626 to CNG in 1984 and that was the year it was introduced. So next year being 2014 would mean that we have had CNG now, in this country, for almost 30 years. And the penetration of course, is very limited, as the Minister of Finance and the Economy pointed out there are some 4,000-plus CNG vehicles in Trinidad and Tobago.

Sen. Cudjoe: In Trinidad.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: In Trinidad. I "doh" know if there are any in Tobago. I do not think there are CNG facilities in Tobago.

Hon. Senator: The two Ministers of Tobago have, I am sure.

Hon. Senator: The Chief Secretary does.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: The Chief Secretary and probably—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Maharaj: And his cousin.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—his cousin, the economic advisor. What is his name? What London?

Hon. Senator: Anslem London.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Anslem London may be able to afford CNG.

Sen. Maharaj: On a regular basis.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Given his remuneration.

Hon. Senator: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: But, Mr. President, there are currently—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: "Doh go there."

Sen. Maharaj: "Buh he going out." [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Mr. President, there are currently [*Crosstalk*] 11 CNG stations in Trinidad and Tobago. There is one of course on the Beetham Highway, which is the gas station on the east bound lane operated by the Police Youth Club. There is one in Mon Repos in San Fernando, which is, I am advised, the highest volume CNG station in the country. There is the one—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: "Ah wonder if he does buy there?"

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: There is the one—there is the NP station in Barataria, there is "ah" NP station in Chaguanas; there is NP, Curepe; NP, Mount Lambert; NP, Rushworth Street; NP, Point Fortin. There is Automotive Components Limited, which operates a private CNG station in its compound on O'Meara Road in Arima. That was built in the year 2001. And in the year 2013, two new CNG stations were opened. One is the Brentwood station in Chaguanas, which is a Unipet station, operated and owned by Mr. Ken Medford. And there is another one in Tacarigua right now—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Peakes.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: The Peakes station in Tacarigua which is another Unipet station that again was opened in the year 2013.

Hon. Senator: With the Wendy's burgers.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: And that, yes, that has a Wendy's franchise in it which is well subscribed by members of my family. [*Laughter*] But, Mr. President, this is the existing CNG network in Trinidad and Tobago. The Opposition of course, makes heavy weather of the fact that the distribution network is not in place but we have been able to put—at least we have been able to put two stations, two new stations.

Sen. Maharaj: "Dem put none."

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: More are to come. I do not think they put any in their period—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Maharaj: Ten years.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—between 2002 and 2010.

Sen. Maharaj: "Dey eh put none."

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: I must say I had my research staff go through all the budget speeches for the period—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Procedural Motion.

Mr. President: Leader of Government Business.

PROCEDURAL MOTION

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Mr. President, in accordance with Standing Order 9(8), I beg to move that the Senate continue to sit until the completion of the business at hand.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. President: This Senate will continue to sit until the completion of the business at hand.

EXCISE DUTY
(COMPRESSED NATURAL GAS) ORDER, 2013

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Thank you very much, Mr. President. Mr. President, so getting back to the CNG network, there are two new stations that were built—that were completed in 2013, Unipet Brentwood and Unipet in Tacarigua. And, Mr. President, as I said, next year will make it 30 years since we have had CNG introduced in Trinidad and Tobago. And the question therefore remains, why has CNG not had the penetration in Trinidad and Tobago that it has had in other jurisdictions around the world?

And in doing our research with regard to penetration, Mr. President, the most successful country in the world with regard to CNG would be Iran—and Iran is a country with the world's second largest natural gas reserves, followed of course by Pakistan. And in Iran there are almost three million vehicles on CNG. Pakistan, Argentina, Brazil, India—anybody who visits the city of New Delhi, all the rickshaws in the city of New Delhi are powered by compressed natural gas—China, Italy, Ukraine. These are the world leaders in compressed natural gas.

But in Trinidad and Tobago, we have had 30 years of CNG and there has been limited penetration and the reason for that is multidimensional. One of the reasons for that, Mr. President, of course, is that there is a cultural reason for that. We have had liquid fuel in our vehicles for close to 100 years in Trinidad. People, of course, see it as having to lose their trunk space and of course Trinidadians are culturally attached to their trunk, because the trunk sometimes serves as a bar in many social events.

Sen. Maharaj: And "ah" kitchen.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: And a kitchen, if one were to go to the beach. And of course there is a fear—when you speak to some people—about the safety factor, but as has been pointed out by, I think the Minister of Finance and the Economy, and Sen. Al-Rawi quoted Colm Imbert from a—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: [*Inaudible*] of finance.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—previous Parliament in 2008. CNG is actually safer than gasoline and diesel because it is a gas, so if there is a puncture of the tank, the gas escapes and that methane gas is lighter than air so it moves upwards, whereas with liquid fuels, it drips out and it catches fire very quickly. So the safety factor is something which, culturally, we have to get people around.

Another constraint to CNG in Trinidad and Tobago is infrastructure, Mr. President. And I would want to point out, as the Minister of Finance and the Economy mentioned, two weeks ago there was a major construction taking place at Sea Lots. And this was where NGC ran a natural gas line into the PTSC compound. And that is to facilitate the conversion of the PTSC fleet to CNG, which is one of the objectives that this Government has set in the whole context of the greening of the bus route. We have set a target, between the NGC and PTSC, to convert the existing bus fleet. And of course, there are also talks about sourcing right hand drive CNG buses, original equipment manufactured from international sources.

But with regard to that particular pipeline that was run, Mr. President, you would notice that the road was not cut, and I am advised that what the NGC used was horizontal directional drilling under the "am"—is it Wrightson Road there or—?

Sen. George: The Beetham, the Beetham Highway.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—under the Beetham Highway, into the PTSC compound. And that pipeline is buried some four to five feet already under the ground, so they would have to, of course, drill down and horizontally under the road—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Technology.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—and that was done so that we would not interrupt—we would not have to cut the road and we would not have to interrupt traffic. [*Desk thumping*] So, the CNG programme has started, and you know, listening to our colleagues opposite, they sound very confused, and it might be a function of the day that we are on, because, Mr. President, I read a press release which is moving around Facebook—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: We know the Beetham Highway and we know where Wrightson Road is though.

Sen. Maharaj: "Yeah" but you do not know where Cucharan Trace is. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Sen. George: And Lalbeharry Trace, and Lalbeharry Trace.

Sen. Hinds: Trust me, I do. Trust me, I do.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Mr. President, I understand the discombobulation opposite because it is very difficult—it is akin to firing a pilot while he is in flight, that a press release be sent out while the Senate is in sitting, I find that to be a very cruel thing to do, on the part of the Leader of the Opposition. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: How many of all "yuh" eleven got to say goodbye?

Sen. Maharaj: "Watch, Kevin, Sen. Hinds going for ah [*Inaudible*]—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: [*Inaudible*] if we make it to midnight.

Sen. Maharaj:—he so worried."

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: So Mr. President, I understand the discombobulation opposite because I heard one solution being the rapid rail, the pre-feasibility, which is a study to justify another study, cost $500 million. But the NGC's plan for converting 17,000 vehicles, that costs $500 million. So, in terms of value for money, I think our plan is of much more value.

We heard about hybrids, and I will talk a bit about hybrids. We heard about CNG, and they seem to—we heard about the water taxi, and I will say that—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Maharaj: MV Su.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—our water taxis run on diesel, which is of course subsidized, and without—even if one would not consider the subsidy, the fuel cost of running the water taxis is one of the largest aspects of operating expenditure in those water taxis. So we are in talks with the Minister of Transport with regard to the conversion of the water taxis, not to CNG, but to LNG, which is the trend that the world is going towards.

Sen. Al-Rawi: He is reading the words of Kamla Persad-Bissessar—[*Interruption*]

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine:—and—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi:—in 2008.

Sen. The Hon. K. Ramnarine: Or you may read them again and again and again. [*Crosstalk*] So Mr. President, in the United States, as the Minister mentioned, there is a shale gas revolution taking place. And there is a lot of emphasis on moving the ships in the United States, especially along the Mississippi River, towards LNG.

So Mr. President, we, like previous governments have tried and they have had limited success, this Government has come up with a strategy that involves the National Gas Company which is a—and the NGC is going to establish a subsidiary company called NGC CNG that will be a special purpose vehicle, not a new state enterprise, but a subsidiary of an existing state enterprise that will drive this entire programme.

So we feel confident that we would be able to make a dent. Already the NGC has taken the lead. They have set the example by buying some 120 CNG vehicles. Those vehicles are already in the NGC and they are being used. And WASA has started the conversion of WASA trucks. And I have seen some of the footage of that, and so on. So, the state enterprise sector is taking the lead.

With regard to hybrids, Mr. President, I will say that we have been studying hybrids, at the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, very carefully. There are several advantages and there are a number of disadvantages. And I will speak first about some of the concerns with hybrids. First of all I would like to say it is actually a good idea. It is one of the few things I agree with the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East on, that hybrids are a good idea, and it is a direction in which the world is headed.

The downside to that of course, which he did not mention in his contribution in the other place, is the price of the hybrid compared to its equivalent. So a Prius—and the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs is the proud owner of a Prius hybrid vehicle—on the market, showroom price, compared to a Toyota Corolla, is about $100,000 to $150,000 or thereabouts, more expensive. So what has to happen, of course, is the provision of incentives, look at motor vehicle tax and VAT and these things to harmonize the price of the hybrid with the price of its equivalent.

The other issue with the hybrid is that it partially solves the problem of the subsidy, because you are still using liquid fuels. You are using it, of course, more efficiently, because you are getting—you are using less fuel to get the same amount of miles, but you are still tied to liquid fuels. But that being the case, I think the solution has to be multipronged.

The third issue with the hybrid is the issue of the disposal of the battery. The battery is made primarily of lithium, and I am not sure to what extent we are prepared for the disposal of lithium batteries of that scale in Trinidad and Tobago. So that has to be a conversation between the Government and Solid Waste Management Company.

Of course, the advantages to the hybrids would be no infrastructure is required. So, we own a hybrid at the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, and we simply drive into a gas station and we fill the hybrid with gasoline, like any other car. So no infrastructure, so that cost is not there and the headache about putting down infrastructure does not arise. The other advantage to the hybrid is that it saves fuel, but you are still tied to liquid fuels.

So, I think there is a need to look at it. We are looking at it. There was a proposal that was done in 2012 by the Ministry with regard to hybrids, and we were told to revise that proposal, and we are revising that proposal in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. So, hybrids are still being considered.

So, Mr. President, I know we have a very long night ahead of us, and I will not want to detain the Senate much longer, simply to say that, as Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, we are committed at the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, to the CNG programme. It is being driven, no pun intended, by the National Gas Company and we have all confidence that they will put things in place to begin the roll out of that CNG project in Trinidad and Tobago, which entails the construction of some 22 dispensing points. That does not mean 22 new stations, it means CNG dispensing equipment in existing stations. And the NGC is also going to be building a dedicated CNG station in its compound at Point Lisas.

6.30 p.m.

So, what is a very simple Motion, the removal of that 5 cents excise from the pricing structure of the CNG has allowed us an opportunity to have a much broader debate on energy, the economy and transportation and I simply want to lend my support to the Motion that was piloted by my colleague, the Minister of Finance and the Economy. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Sen. Cudjoe.

Sen. Shamfa Cudjoe: Thank you, Mr. President. Thanks for the opportunity to contribute to this Motion. Mr. President, this will probably be the shortest contribution I have ever made in this Senate. I just wanted to throw in a couple of words. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Faris start?

Sen. S. Cudjoe: "Why you minding PNM business?"—anyway. Mr. President, we have been tinkering with this issue of energy efficiency and using CNG as a form of vehicular fuel for the past 30 years. We have met, we have talked, we have sat and gone through a lot of discussion over the years. When you check the *Hansard* you would see records of all that. We have provided incentives. But, yet we have been unable to create the desired results and to make the intended impact and I think at this point in the debate, we need to look at, despite all the stated benefits and the advantages, we must look at why is penetration still so very weak. Yeah? We have looked at the cost of conversion, slow payback. We have examined the amount of trunk space that the fuel tanks take—the fuel containers take, the lack of distribution facilities and that is one of the major issues that we ought to treat with.

Mr. President, when you go through the newspapers and some of the articles on this issue of adopting to CNG, you have some of the maxi-taxi drivers, the people who do PH, and so on, complaining about the cost of conversion and asking for the Government to subsidize or to lend some assistance. But the problem is not just that. We ought to also look at whether or not we have the facilities and the infrastructure to provide easy access for this type of fuel.

Now, Mr. President, I decided to make a call to Automotive Components Limited. They are the only authorized company or distributor for the CNG conversion kits. I called. I said I have a little Suzuki Grand Vitara, no Range Rover. I have a Grand Vitara and—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Not two?

Sen. S. Cudjoe: No, no, just one; one little Grand Vitara and I asked what will be the cost to transfer—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Convert.

Sen. S. Cudjoe:—to convert this thing into a CNG vehicle and I was told that the cost is somewhere in the vicinity of $15,000. And it sounded fair to me but the average person making a basic salary may not be able to appreciate that because payback is so slow. It would take a couple of years. I am spending $1,200 on gas each month. It would take a while for me to get back. I spend $300 a week on gas. I use premium and that may be a good thing because this year premium gas went up and I was upset.

I used to like riding around with my vehicle windows wound up in the AC and listening to my music, but in Tobago it is a very bad thing for politicians to do that. If you are riding with your windows up, the people do not like that at all.

You would not get their votes. They want to be able to walk up to your car and talk to you. So this high price of premium gas and this high price of public office has forced me to keep my windows down and to interact a little more, so I am thankful for that but the cost to my pockets for premium gas is so high so I decided to call Automotive Components Limited and I was told the cost is $15,000.

During our conversation the gentleman asked: "Where do you live?" and I said: "Tobago." He said: "You would not be able to get CNG over there. Do you plan to come to Trinidad to refill?" And that is where I had a little concern, because if we are looking at this national policy or this national plan, this move to get all of Trinidad and Tobago to convert to using CNG, so that we can save money on the subsidies that we pay on fuel, and so on, we have to ensure that the facilities and the infrastructure that is available to drivers in Trinidad is also available to us in Tobago. So that is something I would like the Minister of Finance and the Economy to consider, same/equal access to CNG in Tobago if we are really serious about making this move.

Mr. President, I found that somewhat strange because we were told by the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries some time last year, that Tobago sits in a sea of gas and we know that much of the natural gas from this country comes from north of Tobago, block 22. We were informed that we are sitting on over 1.2 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. I found that rather strange, that we provide the gas but we do not have the access to get the facilities to actually get the gas. So, again, I ask the Minister to take a look at that.

Now, Mr. President, we have examined all the different reasons as to why this thing would have been slow to penetrate or why the general public would have been hesitant to adopt this new strategy or this new form of getting energy. I found us wanting—the whole debate wanting—as it relates to examining the fact that our attitude towards cleaner energy and energy efficiency, attitude towards adopting a cleaner, greener way of living. We have been found wanting and it speaks to our attitude towards littering, recycling, water conservation. This whole issue that we are talking about today is not just about mass transportation and public transport. It is not just about having a cheaper form of fuel for cars. We are looking at a bigger problem here in our society, as it relates to embracing environmental preservation. [*Desk thumping*] Because we have grown into a somewhat narcissistic people where, if there is not something in a short-term—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Benefit.

Sen. S. Cudjoe:—benefit for me, then I am not concerned about it. So, while we talk about the problem on our pockets, Mr. President, we need to examine: how does this really affect us? We need to educate our children and educate our people as to how damaging the environment and destroying the environment, the kind of problems that we would face in the future.

We need to get to a place where we could understand and appreciate that Mother Earth or a clean, green, safe, serene environment is an inheritance that we would have earned from our ancestors and it is our responsibility to not be selfish and destroy it now so we could have something to pass on to our children. We have to look at Mother Earth as not just something we can take from but we have to be able to give back, not just for our own longevity but also for the development of our children and everything that we are planning to do.

So I want to call on the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and also the Minister of Finance and the Economy, all Members of Government, all stakeholders involved in this whole process, in this whole project of trying to get Trinidad and Tobago to convert to a more energy efficient way of living to not just look at fuel for cars. We need to just get in the minds of our children and our people about littering, about recycling, about water conservation.

I cannot understand, especially in Trinidad, how someone could see a whole body of water and throw some trash in it. We have been talking a lot about litter wardens and all these different mechanisms to try to get people to stop littering but there has been no enforcement and that calls on us to look at our priorities. We find money and we find the resources to do everything else. Environmental conservation and environmental protection has not been a priority for us. So, I think we need to pull up our socks and not just treat with this as a specialized issue.

We need to look at it as an all-encompassing issue and look at every single department of this whole matter of energy efficiency. We need to change the way in which we operate and the way in which we operate the Parliament, the way in which we conduct our business as Government. You will find us—for instance, I remember going to a function in south. The President had a function in south and each Minister showed up with a fuel-drinking vehicle, sirens and all. If we are not leading by example and showing the people that we—

Sen. Singh: "Nah, nah, we doh use no siren."

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: That is not possible. I do not have a siren. I have never used the vehicle.

Sen. Al-Rawi: You are not the AG.

Sen. S. Cudjoe: You have not used yours but there are some people who used theirs. [*Interruption and crosstalk*] Not anymore? Not anymore. Anyway, Mr. President, the point that I am making is the fact that these vehicles are not—

Hon. Senators: Outriders, outriders.

Sen. S. Cudjoe:—the energy-efficient ones and they are fuel-drinking vehicles. Each one comes in one.

This does not just have to do with Ministers of Government. I am talking about we as a people. This is our lifestyle. We love SUVs. One person travelling in an SUV drinking up all this fuel.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Big cars.

Sen. S. Cudjoe: In Government, also in the Tobago House of Assembly, I have a problem with waiting too late to send out invitations or to send out memos and then you have a driver with an SUV driving, taking invitations and so on. So there are little things, little changes that we can make in our day-to-day lives as to how we conduct our business, how we run our offices, how we run our homes.

I would give you another example. Let us say the Parliament.

Sen. Maharaj: Take off the lights. [*Laughter*]

Sen. S. Cudjoe: I would give you a perfect example. Today is Parliament. Today is a Senate sitting. We end. Parliament would not give you accommodation or make arrangements for you to stay in Trinidad or to be transported anywhere in Trinidad unless Parliament goes beyond 6.30. So I called. I asked: "We are having a workshop tomorrow"—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Ten.

Sen. S. Cudjoe: Ten o'clock. We are having a workshop tomorrow, can we make the necessary arrangements so when I come I could just put up my suitcases rather than bring my suitcases here? The Parliament says: "No". I am expected, if the Parliament does not run late, I have a sitting today and a workshop tomorrow. So all the Tobagonians, if Sen. Wheeler is here, Sen. Moheni, this is the plan, you fly to Trinidad, you use the plane, you use your vehicle to get down here. You come to Parliament. You fly back tonight and fly back tomorrow morning and then fly back to Tobago tomorrow evening. That cannot be the mindset of an energy-efficient company or business or Parliament or government. [*Desk thumping*] And I think that it is high time, especially for people—[*Interruption*] Yes.

I was in conversation with a member of the staff. I was told: "Well we are trying to implement this thing fairly" but what about implementing our rules sensibly? The SRC makes no sense. The SRC provisions, especially as it relates to Tobagonians and those of us who have to travel from far, it makes no sense transporting us back and forth like that. Maybe we could come up with a plan to have Tobagonians, or the people who are coming from deep south, have a small stipend to have an apartment or something in Port of Spain to prevent you from travelling back and forth like that each day but it does not make sense economically, when you look at how much money we are spending and it does not make sense if we are thinking about energy efficiency. So we could make little—and there are empty floors upstairs. We can have little hostels or little rooms where we can change or do whatever needs to be done. I heard we have like an empty seven floors in this building and we can make those into little hostels. I can sleep there tonight and go to the workshop tomorrow rather than flying to Tobago and flying back. It just does not make sense.

So, with those very few words, I just want to say we have to look at everything we do and try to direct our actions towards a more comprehensive plan as it relates to protecting our environment and adopting an energy-efficient lifestyle. With those few words, Mr. President, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

6.45 p.m.

Mr. President: Sen. Balgobin. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. Rolph Balgobin: Thank you, Mr. President. I just have a few short observations. You know, in listening to what has been said so far, I am minded that we really appear to pay too little attention to what is really important. And this Government Motion, I think, gives us a very valuable opportunity to look at our record in this matter, and I do not think it is a good one. I heard Sen. Ramnarine comment on the very slow progress we have had for implementation here, and this is an energy-driven economy. We are supposed to have a mastery of these technologies, they are not complex.

So in a sense if we took it in its totality, this is a very fine example of hypocrisy and political stupidity, "eh". This has been around for 30 years and we have really achieved very little. In fact, we have achieved so little, one might be justified in considering that we have achieved nothing at all. So it is not a very good place for us to be in.

I think that we ought to have set far higher standards for ourselves over the decades where we thought about these things. We are saying now that we have 700,000 cars.

Sen. Hinds: Yeah.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: Seven hundred thousand cars. I got a document from a Ministry that purported to deal with environmental matters. I really cannot recall the name of it now. So I am not sure if it is—it certainly was not Sen. Singh in charge of it at the time, which said that we are going to monitor very strenuously emission standards from motor vehicles. It is written in a document produced by the State, and simultaneous to that, the Government announces that we will allow six-year-old cars to be imported and sold here—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Hinds: Unthinking! Unthinking!

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin:—as foreign used.

Sen. Hinds: Unthinking.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: Now, what you have is, yes, perhaps it lowers the cost of acquisition of a motor vehicle, but those old vehicles generate very—a great deal of noxious emissions and so there are huge efficiency costs with them as well. They are older vehicles; their engines are not as efficient; you do not get as much miles per gallon or miles per litre as the case may be. More importantly, it gives rise to overcrowding on our roads and it cannot have escaped anyone's attention, that you cannot go anywhere in this country, on any day of the week anymore without encountering traffic.

Seven hundred thousand cars, Mr. President, means that there are more motor vehicles running on our nation's roads than we have a workforce to drive it.

Hon. Senator: That is right.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: Our workforce is estimated somewhere between 500,000 and 600,000, usually about 556,000/560 something thousand people. So you have 700,000 cars. So you have more cars than workforce. You are almost getting to a point of about—there is a ratio of two people to one motor car. We continue along this trajectory, we are heading into the realm of cell phones, [*Laughter*] where there is a cell phone per person and some—you know, well, there is more than a million cell phone accounts [*Interruption*] in Trinidad now.

But why are we going this way is the question that I sat and asked myself here as I listened to these very cogent contributions. We have people who are saying, yes, this is the right thing to do and we are agreeing to it and so on. Why are we going this way? Why are we seeing this tremendous uptake in motor vehicle purchase and so on? Is it that as a society we just like to drive? Are we German in

our orientation? Is there an autobahn somewhere? [*Laughter*] Is it that you can get behind the wheel of a motorcar and take off somewhere? Is it that we have gas brains? We just have a need for speed. "We fast and we furious." What is it? What is it?

The only answer I could come up with, Mr. President, is the reason that we have such an insatiable desire for cars, is because the public transport arrangement in this country is totally inadequate, [*Desk thumping*] and it has been for many, many years.

Sen. George: Right. Since Dr. Eric Williams took away the train. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: When we travel and we go away, you go to Washington DC, you go to Singapore, you go to Hong Kong, you go to Toronto—the same Trinidadians—[*Interruption*]

Sen. George: Train and bus.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin:—we jump on "ah" train, we jump on "ah" bus, we take "de" tube, these transportation solutions move tens of millions of people a day—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: That is right.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin:—efficiently. As a country, an oil and gas-rich country, can we not have a mature, depoliticized conversation about how we are moving our citizens around? Or is it that we say, a rail solution is politically unpalatable, because it was an idea generated by one Government or another, in the same way that we are trying to find a new name for OPVs that does not say OPVs? [*Laughter*]

Sen. George: Like GATE. Another dollar for dollar.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: Look, you know, there are problems which must transcend politics.

Sen. Cudjoe: "Yuh say what? Dollar for dollar?

Sen. Al-Rawi: "GATE hah no dollar."

Sen. George: Yes, is dollar for dollar that give rise to GATE.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: There are problems which must transcend our politics and transport has become one of them.

Mr. President, if we have 560,000 people in our workforce and let us be generous, let us say more than half of them live next door to the place they work—which we know to be untrue, and we say, therefore, that 200,000 people

every day must face the traffic, and that those 200,000 people spend an extra hour in traffic every day, do you realize that before 9.00 a.m. every working day, this country has lost 200,000 hours in productive time?

Hon. Senator: That is right.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: This is time which can be used to enhance productivity—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Family.

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin:—or to enhance the quality of one's family life. If we say that it is neither productivity nor family life, let us think about children. Do we realize, Mr. President, how exhausted our children must be when they get home every evening especially if they must commute?

So there is a tremendous cost that this country bears every day. If you take those 200,000 people and you have an hour of traffic to go and an hour of traffic to come, you are losing 400,000 hours of productivity a day; by five days, that is 2 million hours. So, of course, we must all grin and bear it when police and prisoners put on their sirens and pass us. Prisoners reach where they are going faster than me.

Hon. Senator: Every morning. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: So I do not think that I have really heard us ever seriously contemplate the impact on productivity that this problem is having, and CNG is not going to solve the problem. So yes, by all means let us do CNG. It is a laudable thing and we should do it, but there are many, many other things that we need to do here.

So, the old development logic is build more roads. You have more cars to drive, build more roads to drive them on, but we are drunk on gas. I do not think we have enough land to build the amount of roads that we will have to build the way that we continue to buy cars and drive them.

So what we should do instead of just building more roads, Mr. President—more roads to where?—is solve the problem. What is the problem? The problem is the movement of our people, of our citizens, and we have not really contended with that. So what has manifested as a gasoline addiction, is really the merest symptom of an underlying problem, which is we have not solved the problem of moving our citizens from point A to point B.

So how do we break this addiction? We must do to my mind, four things at the very least. We must first set the right example, and I want to come to that in a moment—then we must have the right technology and the right distribution

infrastructure. It is not enough to say that a man is using his car trunk as "ah" bar and as "ah" fridge. I understand that and that is humorous and that is good crosstalk, but where are you going to put your groceries? When you pick up your child and your child has a stroller and you require a car seat and all this kind of things, "whey you putting all ah those things"? So you need a trunk. There is a reason that cars come with trunks and that is that people who move from one place to the other often have to move stuff too. And so it cannot be acceptable to say I have a trunk in my motor vehicle and you are going to fill it up with some CNG tanks. No. I mean, the technology has to address that concern.

The third thing I think that we require are more incentives and finally we must reduce the subsidy. Well, let me come back to that last one in a moment.

First, let me just say this in terms of setting the right example. I was very heartened to hear the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs say that some state enterprises are leading the charge, but Government conversion must come first. I cannot imagine what Prime Minister Manning was thinking when he converted his 626 which is so ancient as to be considered vintage at this point or nearly so, and did not require all Government Ministries and agencies to do that as well.

We have had 30 years, "eh", Mr. President, 30 years. So I am very heartened to hear that some state enterprises are doing it, but I want to know that all Ministries are doing it. We must set the right example. Government must embrace this. If Government wants to do it, our Government must embrace it, and they must start that conversion process and require that new vehicles come with it.

We have to make these conscious decisions rather than just talk about them, because if we just talk about them, they are mere platitudes. We have to take the hard decisions and say okay, from now on every vehicle in this Ministry is going to be CNG enabled, and have the courage to do it.

The second thing in terms of setting an example is for people who receive allowances, duty-free allowances and so on for the purchase of vehicles—Sen. Al-Rawi alluded to that earlier, and it is not just people in this Senate. There are many people who work for the State who receive some form of concession which is similar. Append the allowances to having CNG, tag it, so that you receive a better allowance if you make sure that your vehicle is retrofit in this way.

Mr. President, I would just like to end by making the observation that has been made here several times before, that as a society drunk on gas, gasoline, we need as leaders to acknowledge that there are elements of our fuel subsidy which now need to be reviewed. How we need to review them? Maturely. And where the

subsidy needs to be reduced, it needs to be reduced. Because this country is now not just hooked on gasoline, but it is hooked on deficits and we cannot continue to fund deficits—well, to fund this kind of subsidy with the deficits that we are running. It is just too much and so I want to encourage the Government to continue to do the work that it has begun in this area and to accelerate it.

7.00 p.m.

Mr. President, in closing, I would like to recognize that today is the last sitting for my dear friends, Sen. Beckles and Sen. Hinds.

Hon. Senator: "You know something we ain know."

Sen. Dr. R. Balgobin: This is my information. I hope that I am mistaken, but if I am not, let me just make the observation to say here that it has really been an honour and a privilege to sit with them both. [*Desk thumping*] I have enjoyed listening to their contributions over the years. They have always been insightful. Sen. Hinds has often provoked a bristling response in the same way that one of his predecessors—I recall him to be someone we knew then as Sen. Wade Mark used to do, which is to challenge people and cause them to have to respond.

Sen. Beckles, of course, has always been very even-handed and fair in her dealings. And so it would be remiss of me to speak on this occasion without recognizing them both for their contributions here over the years, and to say to them both, I wish them every success in their future endeavours. I shall miss them dearly and wish them continued blessings and grace. I thank you. Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Sen. Hinds.

Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds: Thank you very warmly, Mr. President, for this opportunity to make a contribution to this very important debate. I would like to, of course, express my gratitude to Independent Senator Balgobin for his very kind thoughts and expressions.

Mr. President, the business of the State must go on. The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs when he entered this debate was very long and analytical on the question of the price per litre gasoline equivalent, the way CNG is measured at the pump, as if we did not know.

I recall some time ago the very Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, just about one month or six weeks or so ago—perhaps just about two months ago—visited the La Brea Industrial Estate where the TGU plant was constructed and well in place for a very long time. It was part of the last administration's plan to power the smelter plant that was to be located thereat.

Sen. Al-Rawi: And SURAL.

Sen. F. Hinds: And SURAL. It was part of a comprehensive plan and I want to stress that because any objective observer must agree that when you look at the way and the methodology of the last administration and predecessor PNM administrations, no objective observer could gainsay or would gainsay that you could see a discernible policy programme, a policy package and a clear way forward.

It was part of that and he appeared there about two months ago and spoke to the national community as though he never knew it existed. When I read his comments on it, I was taken aback. He behaved like Christopher Columbus, as though he, not knowing of it, just assumed that it was never there.

Sen. Al-Rawi: He discovered the Amerindians.

Sen. F. Hinds: Yes. He came today and he spoke about the 5 cent adjustment in the price and, as I said, he was very long-winded on the question of the litre gasoline equivalent. But, Mr. President, as has been disclosed by Sen. Balgobin and, of course, Sen. Shamfa Cudjoe when she dealt with the environmental issue, there are some more fundamental issues around than what is in front of us today.

One of them, of course, is the possibility—it was Dr. Williams who said, many years ago, that there exists, unfortunately, a serious time lag between what we do and what we ought to do and, of course, what is happening in the advanced societies of the world.

As we discuss this grand conversion from other liquid fuels to CNG, there is a distinct possibility, based on the learning that I have seen, that the world is moving ahead. Well, of course, even the Minister who piloted the measure for this debate today and other speakers made the point that you have hybrid vehicles that could use both and the technology is improving substantially beyond what we are now discussing.

So the question and the fundamental question is, with an investment of $500 million for the conversion of 17,500 vehicles, which, if we consider that there are 700,000 vehicles at this time on our nation's roads, you are talking about 2.5 per cent; and to build something like 22 stations to service 17,500 vehicles, the fundamental question is: are we headed in the right direction?

Sen. Al-Rawi: That is right.

Sen. F. Hinds: So by the time we achieve that at the rate we are accustomed to in our culture because—do not take me badly, this Government, in 2010, and that Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs—I take it that he was wet behind the

ear a bit so I excused him at the time. I must admit that he has matured substantially since then. He has learned to be a little more "guilish" and deceptive. He has become a little more treacherous now.

Sen. Al-Rawi: By association. [*Laughter*]

Sen. F. Hinds: Yes. But of course, in those days he was a little cleaner; he was a little lighter; a little more tolerable. Yes. He and Danny Maharaj. [*Laughter*] Yes. But this Minister came here in 2010 and his Government and told us that in the next year we would get eight of the 22 CNG stations. Eight. I asked him, on the margins today, how many do we have and he sheepishly looked at me, deceptively and whispered, two. Two!

Hon. Senator: "What all yuh deliver?"

Sen. Al-Rawi: Shame!

Sen. F. Hinds: I know if he had let Sen. Tewarie say it, he might have said it in a kind of way, make the world feel it was 32, [*Laughter*] 'cause he could twist a socks in Goebbels fashion. [*Laughter*] But that is not the point, you know, Mr. President. [*Interruption*] The point is—well you see—[*Interruption*] That is quite all right. The point is, by the time we get around to investing this $500 million—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Maharaj: You would not be here.

Sen. F. Hinds: Sen. Maharaj is saying I would not be here. That may be true, but I want to assure him I will be in Trinidad and Tobago and as long as God gives me strength, I will keep my eyes on this corrupt Government, and I promise him, when I leave this place, I am going to Balisier House—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senators: That is right!

Sen. F. Hinds:—and I will function from Balisier House—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Cudjoe: That is right!

Sen. F. Hinds:—and I will continue to look at this Government because this Government is indubitably a serious danger and a threat to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Hear! Hear!

Sen. Cudjoe: Indubitably!

Sen. Maharaj: "Dey change de locks in Balisier House."

Sen. F. Hinds: So I will forever be vigilant and as a good member of the PNM, if I may be permitted a metaphor, this thing is a tug of war. The PNM on this side and the UNC and their corrupt friends are on the other side.

Sen. Singh: "Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah".

Sen. F. Hinds: And as you know, Mr. President—Mr. President, I am being disturbed.

Mr. President: Please withdraw.

Sen. F. Hinds: I did not say the UNC was corrupt. I said, the UNC and their corrupt friends.

Sen. Singh: Oh, you mean Monteil. [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

Sen. F. Hinds: I said the UNC and their corrupt friends and that is quite parliamentary. But I was making the point, we are on this side and we are saying, "Heave," we want to pull them to the ground. So even though I let loose of the rope from the Senate, I will take another place on the rope—[*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Tell them that. Tell them that. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. F. Hinds:—and pull it down. And I want to pull it down real soon. I want to pull it down real bad. I want a new Government in Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Senator: That is right.

Sen. F. Hinds: It will not solve our problems, but it will be a platform for solution. No solutions to Trinidad and Tobago could come under the governance of the PP.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Well "putted". Well said.

Sen. F. Hinds: It has to start with removing them and that is my burning ambition. [*Crosstalk*] That is my burning ambition.

Mr. President, I am being distracted, but I mean, I do not have much time. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Tell them, Fitzy, tell them.

Hon. Senator: Ramajay! Ramajay! Tonight is your last.

Sen. F. Hinds: Mr. President, I am acutely aware that when midnight comes tonight, if I was midsentence at midnight, I would have to stop speaking at that time.

Sen. Singh: I never viewed you as Cinderella. [*Laughter*]

Sen. George: Cinderasta.

Sen. F. Hinds: Mr. President, I am hearing my friend Minister George who, I must tell you, I will miss tremendously, but I am a bit relieved not to have to sit here and see him every Tuesday. But I could live with that.

We have some issues, as we seek to transition from diesel and super and the other fuels we use, to CNG. The people who have done so before would tell you. Well look at the problem that my learned friend from Tobago told us about. She lives in Tobago; she was interested to make the investment for her conversion to CNG, but she was told quite flatly by operators in Tobago, there is no place to refuel there and there are limited opportunities in Trinidad and Tobago and that is one of the disincentives to moving on to the transition to CNG.

Another one is the very disincentive that the fuel subsidy would have created by making other fuels more attractive for use as opposed to CNG. So these are issues that I would have thought that the Minister of Finance and the Economy, well paid as he is—

Sen. Cudjoe: With his Burberry tie.

Sen. F. Hinds:—and he was indeed very well paid.

Sen. Al-Rawi: No, he went cheap.

Sen. Singh: Do not begrudge the man!

Sen. Al-Rawi: He went cheap.

Sen. F. Hinds: He was prompted out of his chair at FCB, at a cost of $10 million.

Sen. Howai: Too cheaply. Too cheap.

Sen. F. Hinds: And he says too cheaply, but we have not had value for money from him. "Ah want back meh $10 million before ah leave here tonight." [*Desk thumping*] And my friend, Sen. Al-Rawi, did point out, using *Hansard*, and thank God there is a record, Mr. President. He was able to use *Hansard* to demonstrate that when this matter came before the Parliament in the other place initially, the Government, in opposition at the time, took positions, diametrically opposed to what is being proposed before us now, to demonstrate for the hundredth time, the treachery and incredulity of this Government.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Wilful amnesia.

Sen. F. Hinds: It is and it is on the record, but they do not even budge. They are just shameless and they have become—I heard Sen. Balgobin speak about us as a nation addicted to gas. They are addicted to untruths.

7.15 p.m.

So they now come presenting these measures, holier than thou. You would never believe that they are on record as saying the things that they have said, so here we go. And it is argued, and I think forcefully and sensibly, that the only time you would see out-and-out wholesale conversion would be after the fuel subsidies are completely removed. And as one speaker said earlier today, to do that would have serious political implications, and you could only expect that from a serious Government and this Government is incapable of that.

So that there are some fundamental issues, Mr. President, that we must hurdle as we speak glibly about these matters. As Sen. Cudjoe, Sen. Al-Rawi, Sen. Dr. Balgobin and others have already suggested, this is not a new discussion. It has been around for a very long time, as well as the question of diversification. On that point, I read with great interest, an article written by Sunity Maharaj in the *Sunday Express* of Sunday, November 24, 2013. It is under the rubric, "Dear Teenager", a most fascinating piece; fascinating as well because this is a lady obviously of illuminating intellect; a woman who writes frankly and expresses herself particularly well but, usually, she deals with hard-core political issues, political analysis. This article is an article addressed to the youth of the nation. I am far from being youth, but I read it because I have an interest in youth and hear what she, in part, had to say. I quote:

> "Dear Teenager, do not get lost in this time of mad money. It is a gold-plated illusion like the pot of gold under the rainbow. Twenty years of petro-dollars is nothing more than a blink of the eye."

She was alluding to the fact that the experts have said we can expect a supply of gas and oil for another 20 years—the Scott Ryder Report and so on. So she was alluding to that, and telling the youth of this nation, notwithstanding the glib talk that the Minister of Finance and the Economy came with as he presented this measure here today, she is saying:

> "Twenty years of petro-dollars is nothing more than a blink of the eye. It may be outside your own experience, but the rest of us just have to think about the time that has passed between the first Manning administration and today's Persad-Bissessar administration to see how little change can be achieved in 20 years and how little difference money can make in solving the real problems of our world. If in 50 years the older generation has not diversified to save our neck…"

She goes on to say:

> "So, you must not sleep through your teenage years, assuming that when you wake up in adulthood, there will be a job and a comfortable life awaiting you. Stay alert and I can promise you an adventure."

Now, I found that very, very interesting. She touches on the question of our circumstances with the hydrocarbons and she is demonstrating to the young people, "Look, we have some serious challenges in front of us", and I really went into the article to reaffirm to this Government this is not a joke. You are the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and Trinidad and Tobago is beset with some serious issues, serious.

So when you come here with these measures, wanting to expend another 500—a half a billion dollars to construct 22 stations, and then to get 17,000 vehicles of 700,000 converted, I wonder if we are serious. Is it worth our while? Is it worth the investment? One can argue it is, but look at the way things are going. So we need to think. Having said that, I recall—and may his soul rest in perfect peace—it was Cuthbert Joseph—Dr. Cuthbert Joseph one day told me that Sir Edward Betham Beetham, the last governor of Trinidad and Tobago, against whom the Beetham Highway is named—[*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Vieira: The last English governor.

Sen. F. Hinds: "Yeah", the last English governor. Well, the last governor.

Sen. Vieira: No. Solomon Hochoy was the last.

Sen. F. Hinds: No, governor general.

Hon. Senator: The last British.

Sen. F. Hinds: "Ah say Solomon Hochoy was our governor general." [*Crosstalk*] When he was leaving office and handing over the responsibility to the then local government—the government of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, he gave the government and people a gift of a little plaque with the word "Think" and it was left on the cabinet table. History has it that when the UNC came into government it disappeared. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Singh: No, no, that was—[*Interruption*]

Sen. F. Hinds: I said when the UNC came to Government it disappeared [*Desk thumping*] and it is self-evident that it disappeared.

Sen. Ramnarine: As with the piano.

Sen. F. Hinds: Well, no, at least, we found back the piano under a—we found back the Attorney General's piano under a sheet in the house, but we never found back the sign. So I am just reminding you we have to think. We have to think and we have to think seriously. [*Crosstalk*] You all are the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and [*Crosstalk*] this habit you have of talking, "What the PNM do and what the PNM do", the people of the country do not want to hear that anymore. You are the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] You are the Government, and it is your time to think; it is your time to act; it is your time to do and to think seriously and to invest $500 million to deal with 17,500 cars, 2.5 per cent of the 700,000 cars in the nation, that is unthinking. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: That is right.

Sen. F. Hinds: And especially when you consider the unlikelihood—based on this nation's track record and low productivity—of us achieving that in the next five years; a serious matter. By the time we get around to completing this, the world would have moved on. And this thing—the point that Sen. Cudjoe made is a serious point. Let me tell you something. I represented Laventille East/Morvant and I had to dwell among the peoples of Sea Lots and Beetham—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: Hinds for a better mind.

Sen. F. Hinds:—and the Eastern Main Road. I will tell you something, this is a serious matter, you know.

Sen. Singh: Hinds for a better mind.

Sen. F. Hinds: Yes, that is what I offered them. I did not offer them diamond and gold. "I was not no millionaire. I did not have two Range Rovers and all ah that", I just offered them to think. So my theme was "For better minds vote Hinds" and I lived with that; I lived with that. [*Desk thumping*] That is what I did: show them consciousness, show them wisdom, teach them right and try to be a good example to them.

But, when you consider a child living along that East-West Corridor there in the area say, for example, the Beetham or any of those areas along there—Sea Lots and so. You have the Eastern Main Road, you have the Priority Bus Route and you have the Beetham Highway, the Churchill Roosevelt Highway, the lower ends of it. It is 24 hours a day fuel is being burnt up and down there. So a child born in that neighborhood, to the extent that that child does not leave that area and go to Manzanilla or Mayaro or some nice beach in Tobago, it is to that extent that child would not have inhaled a breath of fresh air. I was startled to learn the other day that there is a higher percentage of bronchial ailments in those communities than across the nation; a serious matter, no joke.

Sen. Hadeed: "Kamal-ain create that yuh know. Kamal eh create that."

Sen. F. Hinds: She created a thousand other problems, but I do not want "no" distraction from you, you know, because you just woke up just now; like you just woke up. "You wasn' here all the time" [*Desk thumping*] and it is amazing that you are the face of this Government's public relations, but I want to leave that for another time outside.

Hon. Senator: We will deal with that.

Sen. F. Hinds: I would not be here. Yes, so you leave me alone, Sen. Hadeed [*Laughter*] and let me proceed with my small contribution, [*Laughter*] for God's sake. It is a very serious situation, Mr. President.

So Sen. Cudjoe raised the environmental question, something that the very high-priced Minister of Finance and the Economy did not even mention; does not care, did not even mention, but he wants us to approve a measure to invest $500 million. I know that is small money to them, very small money.

Mr. President, I have found in this Government's position in this debate, as in many others, no clear policy position. Sen. Al-Rawi found expressions from the Opposition Benches from persons who are present in the Cabinet today who would have approved this measure that is before us, that is completely contradictory to what is in front of us. This Government is confusion, they confuse people. There is no clear policy about anything. How could we expect good of them then? No policy! As I said earlier, three years ago, they promised us 22 of these stations, we have gotten three—or sorry, one or two, according to the Minister.

The Minister of Finance and the Economy was asked what would be the cost to build the CNG stations; the infrastructure and the cost to convert the vehicles. He has not answered that. The Minister of Finance and the Economy has not answered that, and those are very serious issues, very serious issues.

We saw and we heard in another contribution or two, that the maxi-taxi operators—they host a number of vehicles—and they are saying that by their calculation and estimation, the fuel subsidy that each maxi utilizes on an annual basis, I take it, is about $90,000, but the cost of a conversion kit is about $50,000. So that they are suggesting that if you, by way of fuel subsidy, expend on one $90,000 and the cost of conversion is about $50,000, they are arguing, and pretty sensibly if you take the national good, that the Government should support those conversions and in the shortest possible time they will recoup the moneys and save tremendous amounts in the very fuel subsidy that they are about to cut. That is a forceful argument and the maxi-taxis are a substantial part of the motor vehicles on our roadways.

It was the PNM in 1981 that introduced the Priority Bus Route and the maxi-taxis in this country. We could look back on it with hindsight today; an antiquated method of implementing mass transport, but it was done and it worked to great effect. The thing is still in vogue today. It was the PNM that proposed a rapid rail system, something that we have heard about in the course of this debate already today, and this Government rejected the idea. They quarreled about it on the campaign on their way to Government. They made a whole lot of noise, seagull style.

So once they came to Government, they had to carry through on that, they abandoned the project. They say so much was spent on the—not feasibility—on some studies and all of that, and they abandoned the idea, but this is the same Government that sees the need to reduce the fuel subsidy because of the prodding from the IMF that is finding it difficult to do because of the obvious political implications.

The Minister told us today that diesel contributed—diesel was the largest contributor to the utilization of the fuel subsidy, and yet they attacked premium to increase the price, a budget or two ago, and all the consumer did was to move from premium to super, so we are back to square one.

But a mass transit system is important. You did not get it from the PNM alone, an Independent Senator said so today. It is important, and it is not about building roads to come out of this. We have issues with disposing of even these vehicles. We import a whole lot of them, foreign used, 700,000 on the roads. It would not surprise me if one morning you just come out your door and meet a gridlock in front your door—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: That is right.

Sen. F. Hinds:—and we cannot go anywhere. We are not developing roads far enough. We know that is not the real solution. We are doing nothing. We have a problem, big, big, big problem, but there is no thinking because they hid Sir Edward Betham Beetham's sign. [*Laughter*] His gift, they hid it. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

7.30 p.m.

Sen. Singh: Must be the first PNM government.

Sen. F. Hinds: His gift, they hid it. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Far, far away.

Sen. Singh: The last governor and the first PNM government—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. F. Hinds: Yes. Yes.

Sen. Singh: Oh God, Hinds!

Sen. F. Hinds: So, Mr. President, we have traversed—I promised myself I would not be very long unless I am provoked.

Hon. Senator: We know that.

Sen. Dr. Mahabir: We want to provoke you tonight.

Sen. F. Hinds: We have traversed the issue of the fuel subsidy; a lot has been said about that. We have traversed the question of the rapid rail, and I remind my friends, it was not only the rapid rail, it was water taxis as well.

Sen. Al-Rawi: That is right, buses.

Sen. F. Hinds: And they play an important part, and I remember I was in the Parliament. And let me say, I have been in the politics now for 19 years. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Singh: Sing brother, sing.

Sen. F. Hinds: I have spent 15½ of those 19 years in the Parliament.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Hear! Hear!

Sen. F. Hinds: I have acquired some experience. I have seen the little best of the UNC and the magnificent worst, and every time we think that they have hit an all-time low and cannot do any worse they find a way to get lower.

Sen. Al-Rawi: And lower.

Sen. F. Hinds: They lower the bar, yet again. They have broken their own record. I remember in the 90s—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Come back to the PNM, you know.

Sen. F. Hinds:—we had to protest in this House under a Minister of Works, called Sadiq Baksh—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: I glad he—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. F. Hinds:—they went, and again always looking for a deal. A lot of people would not remember that but I was in the Parliament. I do not think anybody else here—I think Mr. Ganga Singh was. Yes, my friend Sen. Ganga Singh was in the Parliament.

They went to England; they were not asked. They invited themselves to England and went to a firm called Middle and Red. This Government—the Prime Minister was in the Cabinet at the time—went to a firm called Middle and Red and bought a host of old secondhand rejected buses and brought here, shamelessly painted them UNC yellow, [*Laughter*] and let them loose on the people of this country. The buses had no windows. [*Laughter*] But in England they do not want too much of that.

And I saw these old buses roll around for about three months and then they all disappeared. What did they do with them? I do not know where they dumped them. I think they maybe have them in the back of Rienzi Complex, or something. [*Desk thumping*] But the question of disposing of vehicles is a major issue. These are things I would have wanted to hear the Minister of Finance and the Economy, or at the least the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs tell us about. Instead, we heard them—but let me not bother with that, this might be a little too crude on my—let me leave that one alone unless I am provoked.

Hon. Senator: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. Singh: [*Inaudible*] leh we hear.

Sen. F. Hinds: Nah, nah, nah, let me leave the Prime Minister out of this for the time being. There will be time enough to examine her record.

So, Mr. President, I would like to conclude, because, of course, I would want to contribute to the other Motions [*Desk thumping*] that are in front of us.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Yeah!

Sen. F. Hinds: I simply want to conclude by asking the Minister of Finance and the Economy and his colleagues in the Cabinet to think, and to understand that you have the responsibility to solve the problems. It was CLR James who quite correctly said:

> The most sure-fire sign of a Government or a leader that things are going badly is when you do not appear to have solutions to the problems that beset us.

There are problems—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: That is why you—[*Inaudible*]—the PNM.

Sen. F. Hinds: I see the Minister of National Security staring me in the face; he knows that there is a problem with crime. I asked him, Mr. President, I asked him last week in this Parliament to tell me how many murders there were as at the

end of September. He told me 289. You know what the figure is today? Three hundred and seventy-nine; in two months. He knows that there are problems. We have a crime problem. We have environmental issues. I ask you, as I take my seat, not for the last time in this House, [*Desk thumping*] to think and to get serious. We will give some support.

Sen. Sturge: Great is Pennelope. She shall prevail.

Sen. F. Hinds: We will give some support to any measure that will advance the cause and the well-being of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, but we are certainly not satisfied that what you have brought to us today reflects sufficient depth and thought, and to give us the confidence that we are not heading to hell in a UNC hand basket. Mr. President, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Sen. Vieira.

Sen. Anthony Vieira: Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President: You are welcome. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. A. Vieira: Before I begin, I was just reflecting on what Senators, Roach and Singh, had said earlier, and it struck me that we empower and enable the differently-abled, not out of pity or because we are altruistic, but for our own benefit and because it is the right thing to do. [*Desk thumping*] Here, every creed and race finds an equal place, and when the place is not equal, our job, our obligation is to even it out.

Sen. Al-Rawi: That is right. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. A. Vieira: And it is to our benefit, because as Minister Ramnarine reminded us, in the United States Franklin Roosevelt was a president who overcame polio, and he proved to be one of the great American presidents. We also had Stephen Hawking, and if we had not had him empowered, the world would not have had the benefit of that most powerful mind.

The Dalai Lama reminds us that at the two ends of our lives we need to be cared for: when we are infants, and when we get into our old age and dotage. This idea of being able is an illusion, so you remind us about the need to care and to be a compassionate society for our own benefit. An impairment need not be a disability; in fact it can make a very positive difference and contribution.

Turning now to the Order. The Order today was a relatively simple one to facilitate the use of compressed natural gas. I was not planning to speak on it, but then I got sort of enlivened by the debate. On the face of it, pretty innocuous, no

objection in principle, and I would support any initiative that promotes a cleaner environment, which CNG would do. I do not plan to debate on how CNG would compare with diesel or premium, or electric or hybrid and solar, but I agree that it does allow us an opportunity to consider an even more fundamental issue, and this really has to do with the number of vehicles on our roads.

Mr. President, we are a nation in gridlock, and it is seriously affecting our quality of life, our effectiveness and our efficiency in the workplace. When you think about it—I think Sen. Hinds made reference to the fact that our kids are inhaling all this pollution, but they also have no time to play when they are in traffic from early in the morning and they are getting home late at night. People come to work tired. In a world where few things are guaranteed, it seems that the promise of traffic is an exception. Traffic is now a new constant.

Sen. Al-Rawi: That is right.

Sen. A. Vieira: Now, the matter about CNG as a fuel for vehicles seems to me really to be a case of rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.

This debate really should not be about the fueling of vehicles, but about having less vehicles. Our roads are congested, and congested with the most foul-smelling vehicles. I would really like to see, as has been suggested, that the Government take the lead; have all the PTSC fleet converted to CNG; have all the state enterprise vehicles converted to CNG; all the heavy vehicles converted to CNG. I think it was Andre Gunder Frank, the economics professor, who talked about—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Dependency theory.

Sen. A. Vieira:—the difference between the first world and the third world is not because in the first world people are smarter and they work better, it is because of systems. In the first world where you have proper infrastructure and better systems you could do less work and accomplish more. It is not because we lack the work ethnic here.

I dare say, I think in Trinidad people may work a lot harder than our counterparts in France and Germany, and these places. We really do need to look at a mass transit system.

Sen. Al-Rawi: That is right. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. A. Vieira: It is really shameful when I see people in the rain, shivering with their feet wet, because the roads are flooding and they cannot get a taxi to go home late at night. We deserve better than that, and it is not rocket science. We can have: on the old train line we can run a—whether you want to call it a

multi-rail or a magnetic rail from Sangre Grande to Chaguaramas, and one from San Juan to Point Fortin, and have hubs in-between. That could move thousands of people very efficiently and very easily—1.3 million people, 700,000 vehicles; that is nearly 500 cars per thousand.

I understand from Sen. Mahabir that we are four times the global norm for traffic density. Are we going to start to do like you see in other countries where you might have your fancy car but you could only drive it on one day because it ends in an odd number and another day if you have a car with an even number? We do not have to wait to take such drastic measures.

Mr. President, my hope is that Government will really take urgent steps to remove the congestion on our roads, to end this gridlock which is now routinely subjecting our citizens—If we accept the key role that transportation plays in our country and in our social and economic development, then we really need to consider a mass transit system.

I hear that it may cost a lot, but it seems to me that that cost will pale in significance to the other costs that would be inflicted on citizens if we do not act. We need to act now. We cannot afford not to embark on an ambitious, comprehensive and holistic transportation plan for this nation. Mr. President, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: The hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai): Thank you, Mr. President. I have to say that the debate seemed to have perhaps drifted a little way off from the purpose which we came here for, which was really speaking of the reduction in the excise. And there was little talk also about the cost of the reduction of the excise, which is, as I said, $300,000 a year, its impact on the fiscal position or anything like that. I think as we are wont to do, Members have expanded the debate, and perhaps quite rightly because it gives an opportunity for perhaps a wider discourse on matters of national importance. For example, the whole question of a mass transport system which certainly is something that has to be considered. I do not think there is any issue on this side about the question of the role of a mass transportation system, but, of course, there is the issue of the appropriateness, the cost, the timing and so on, and a number of other issues, practical issues that have to go into the discussion around that issue.

Of course you know, the discussion also went into the cost of building 22 stations. Quite incorrectly, it was said that it was going to cost us $500 million, the initial 22 stations; that it was a waste of time. Of course, the building of the stations—the $500 million is for more than building the stations, but the building of the stations is not intended to only address 17,000 vehicles or 18,000 vehicles.

The purpose is that once those stations are built, as we said, the focus will be to get up to 100,000 vehicles in the first instance—well, by the end of phase two. But that is just a conservative number using, in a sense, for purposes of the financial analysis, more so than the expectation that the number would get to 100,000 and stop there.

But the thing is, when you get to those vehicles, all those—that 100,000 vehicles—will be using these stations and not just the 17,000 that we had indicated would be the initial target in phase one. We went on to a number of other issues and, of course, we certainly, I think, Mr. President, you would have allowed a lot of latitude given the fact that we are dealing with, you know, a swan song situation for a number of Members here, so I suppose [*Laughter*] the issue would have been to try [*Desk thumping and laughter*] and allow Members to speak.

Hon. Senator: A remembrance.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Yeah, yeah, yeah, a remembrance. So that, you know, certainly, you know, at least something could be left on the *Hansard* to reflect the fact that certain people were here.

Hon. Senator: That they were here.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Yeah, certain people were here.

Hon. Senator: Kilroy was here.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: The Kilroy. Yeah. [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Senator: Very good, Jerry.

7.45 p.m.

I think overall, Mr. President, the fact of the matter is the debate was enlightening and illuminating in some areas, and it certainly emphasized the need for us to address the issue of transportation which continues to be the bane of our society. In fact, it is probably one of the biggest negative impacts on productivity in our country because of the loss of man hours and of course all of the other parts associated with that burning of additional fuel as you sit in traffic jams, we compound the problem. We understand these issues, and the thing is, Rome was not built in a day. There is no magic wand that we could wave and change the last 50 years of not having a mass transit system, and put a new one in place. It is going to take time.

Part of what we were speaking to here when we actually put this particular initiative in place, was simply to indicate that it is part of a broader plan and a broader approach to deal with the whole issue of the burning of fossil fuels and the fuel subsidy that we have.

In a sense, this is the first real activity that we are seeing after how many decades of discussing this matter, that I have to give credit where credit is due. This Government certainly has taken the necessary steps to start getting us in that direction. [*Desk thumping*] There is certainly a credible plan, and I would like to congratulate the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs and the NGC for initiating and starting to put this plan in place. From the project plans that I am seeing and the initiatives that are being put in place, I feel fairly comfortable that this administration will see some real tangible progress being made in the next two years to getting us well on the way to conversion to CNG.

I also want to say that the intention here is not that we are going to build stations and leave the fuel subsidy where it is, but it is part of a two-pronged approach to get us to the point where we can start removing the fuel subsidy without some of the attendant social, political and economic costs that go along with the removal of the subsidy. It is in fact the only credible plan that could be introduced, certainly in the short-term, on a reasonably cost effective basis to achieve what we want to achieve. The numbers certainly bear out the fact that the rate of return on the investment will be one that makes it commercially justifiable and commercially viable to make this particular change.

Mr. President, we have another debate coming up before us, so I do not want to prolong the discussion. I would simply want to say that this represents a credible first step on the way to removal of the fuel subsidy, with a reduction of the carbon footprint in Trinidad and Tobago and for making a meaningful reduction in the costs associated with the issue of the burning of gasoline in Trinidad and Tobago.

I expect that as we go forward, some of the other broader issues which came up relating to things like mass transit systems and so on will be dealt with in due course.

With those few short words, Mr. President, I beg to move.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Excise Duty (compressed Natural Gas) Order, 2013 be confirmed.

RELATED MOTIONS

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (**Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai):** Mr. President, I beg to move Motion No. 3 standing in my name.

In moving this Motion, I seek the leave of the Senate to debate along with this matter Motion No. 4 on the Order Paper which relates to the same subject.

Mr. President: Is this the wish of the Senate?

Assent indicated.

TREASURY NOTES ACT
(INCREASE IN BORROWING)

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (**Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai):** Mr. President, I beg to move:

"*WHEREAS* section 3(1) of the Treasury Notes Act, Chap. 71:39 provides that the Minister of Finance and the Economy on the written advice of the Governor of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago may, for the purposes of promoting monetary credit and exchange conditions most favourable to the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, borrow money in Trinidad and Tobago in such sum or sums not exceeding in the aggregate, one thousand million Trinidad and Tobago dollars and such further sum or sums or the equivalent thereof in any foreign currency or currencies as may be specified by resolution of Parliament, by the issue of Notes;

And Whereas it is necessary for the Minister of Finance and the Economy to borrow further sums of money for the purposes stated in section 3(1) of the Act;

Be It Resolved that for the purposes of promoting monetary credit and exchange conditions most favourable to the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, the Minister of Finance and the Economy is hereby authorized to borrow such further sum or sums in Trinidad and Tobago, not exceeding in the aggregate, fifteen thousand million Trinidad and Tobago dollars or the equivalent thereof in any foreign currency or currencies, by the issue of Notes."

Mr. President, as I outlined in the first part of what I was saying—but as we indicated it also relates to Motion No. 4—the purpose of the debate here is an increase in the limit under the Treasury Bills Act from $15 billion to $30 billion, and an increase in the limit under the Treasury Notes Act from $5 billion to $15 billion.

This increase is to facilitate open market operations by the Central Bank, to deal with the issue of the build-up of liquidity in the system. While there has been a return to private sector borrowing as the economy has returned to growth, the build-up of surplus funds is not expected to be absorbed in the short-term.

Mr. President, as the economy has started to gradually return to growth, the total private sector credit over the first three quarters of this year increased by 2.4 per cent, 2.6 per cent and 3.2 per cent respectively. Business credit, however, during that time has actually continued to slow down, measuring minus 3.7 per cent for the end of September 2013. This has been offset by the growth in consumer borrowing which showed an increase of 5.7 per cent for the quarter ended September 2013, giving us overall growth in private sector credit or continued expansion of private sector credit at 3.2 per cent for the quarter.

The thing is that while the economy has started to get back to growth once again, the difficulty we face is that the level of business sector borrowing has not continued to grow at the same pace, and this is something that we need to address as we go forward. Part of the reason for that is of course the build-up of cash, the build-up of profits and the retention of cash by a number of companies; although in the previous quarters while the economy was relatively flat, was not growing, actually had shrunk a bit in 2009 to 2011.

The fact of the matter is that companies remained fairly profitable and the profits were generating sufficient cash to allow a build-up of cash within some of these companies. Of course, given the low interest rates which currently prevails for deposits in the system, what has happened is that people have reinvested a lot of their cash in their businesses for further expansion of their businesses rather than actually borrowing from the banks. That is part of the issue. As I said, the other part is in fact that the economy has just gotten back to growth, and that only happened since—[*Interruption and desk thumping*]

This build-up of liquidity has been occurring since 2008. In fact in early 2010 a decision was made to increase these limits, but it did not go through because of the change in government which occurred immediately thereafter. So the build-up of liquidity and the build-up of surplus cash have been actually continuing to grow over the past few years between 2008 and 2010. Therefore it is something that certainly needs to be addressed.

The previous limits started in 1961 with a Treasury Bill limit of $50 million which reflected the small size of the economy at that time, and has continued to grow, increasing to $125 million in 1973, $1 billion in 1987—which was the first time that we had $1 billion in T-Bills back in 1987. And then in 2003 we started with the introduction of notes in addition to the Treasury Bills, the limit for which was increased to $5 billion in 2003, and then $15 billion in 2006. That figure is being increased further again to $30 billion currently, based on the fact that the limits are fairly close to being fully utilized by the Central Bank.

That reflects a build-up of deposits in the system since 2006. In fact, around 2009 I think the total deposit base in the system—and I am speaking from memory and perhaps I may need to be corrected here—but I think it was somewhere around $53 billion. Today, the total deposit base in the system is closer to $93 billion. So there has been quite a substantial increase in the total deposits within the financial system over the past four or five years.

[MR. VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

This build-up of deposits within the system has contributed overall also to the build-up of liquidity overall.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, on March 12, 2010, approval was granted for the submission of resolutions on the adjustment of the limit of government borrowing under the—sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker—Mr. Vice-President—sorry; I am in the wrong place.

In March 2010, there was approval granted by Cabinet for increase in the limits which we are currently debating. But as I said, due to the dissolution of Parliament in May 2010, the legislative drafting department was unable to advance the resolutions which had been previously approved for laying in Parliament.

8.00 p.m.

So, this is something that has been outstanding for some time and I expect that with this current increase that we are proposing now, is likely to result in a little bit more aggressive action by the Central Bank in terms of addressing the issue of liquidity to some extent.

Of course, Mr. Vice-President, the high levels of liquidity can be reduced by a number of policy measures. As we know, open market operations is just one. Of course, we can have increases in reserve requirement which is not something that is generally utilized these days, but certainly it is one of the options that is available for the Central Bank in order to reduce the level of liquidity in the system. Of course, sales of foreign exchange also reduce the level of overall liquidity in the system because Central Bank simply sells foreign currency and takes in TT dollar currency in return. Of course, one would probably argue too, that a reduction in the Government's deficit will certainly help in terms of addressing the whole issue of the build-up of liquidity overall in the system. Any in-exogenous increase in a number of these variables will result in an increase in overall level of liquidity.

As a consequence of the build-up of liquidity, of course, interest rates have come down quite dramatically. In fact, right now, I think, ordinary savings, which, in 2008, I am told was something like a little below 2 per cent, on average about 2 per cent if you had a small savings account; actually that rate is now .2 per cent. So it has moved from—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: So much?

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai:—2 to .2. Yes, you know, for people who have deposits on savings accounts, and certainly the deposit interest rates on other types of deposits are pretty low. Therefore, that is something that, of course, we need to be aware of, because it does affect people who are on fixed incomes. People who are on fixed incomes and depending on interest rates on their deposits from which to generate some level of income to supplement their savings to meet their own living requirements, will find that the drop in the interest rate is something that—and the level of interest rates currently prevailing, is something that would significantly affect their level of income.

I want to say though, Mr. Vice-President, that this increase that we are asking for does not count as part of the country's borrowing limits as far as the rating agencies and the multi-lateral lending agencies such as the IMF and so on are concerned, simply because the funds that are taken up by way of these issues are simply deposited in the Central Bank and they are held as funds that are sterilized, and when the bills mature they are simply paid out of the deposits that are held at the Central Bank.

So, normally, the multi-lateral lending agencies, the rating agencies and so on, do not normally count the increase that we are asking for here as part of the overall total of deposits—sorry, of loans, the overall country's level of debt stock. Although we do report it as part of our normal reporting, we report two numbers. We report the gross debt stock and the net debt stock, and the net debt stock is the one that is typically used by the rating agencies and so on to look at the debt that is owed to third parties.

Of course, there is, however, an associated interest cost that goes along with this when we borrow these funds, but, again, the repayment comes from the Central Bank itself which issues the bonds and then the interest that goes into them, when we pay it, it then comes back to us by way of an increased dividend payment at the end of the year. So, we basically, also sterilize to some extent or reduce the impact to some extent of the interest cost that we have to pay to third parties.

So, overall, Mr. Vice-President, this is really just a tool for monetary policy and it is not a fiscal measure from that point of view. I want to say that certainly the build-up of excess liquidity at this time is not necessarily bad because excess liquidity itself is not necessarily a bad thing. It does contribute to a fall in interest rates and if you are borrowing then, certainly, you would want to see a reduction in interest rates and that can act as an incentive to increase the level of investments in the system as a whole. So that, over on its own the whole question

of where the level of liquidity is, and at this time it is not a very significant issue because of the fact that in a sense the funds themselves have not been aggressively multiplying by way of the multiplier effect throughout the system and, therefore, in a sense it has been relatively benign.

But the point about it is that we have to take measures to ensure that the Central Bank is well equipped, so that if they do need to take measures to address the whole level of excess liquidity in the system that they have a number of policy options that they could choose to implement. As I said, from increases in the reserve requirement through to open market operations or to other initiatives that could be implemented by the Government in conjunction with the Central Bank to deal with that particular issue.

Of course, the negative effect of this liquidity is that it potentially could increase the demand for foreign exchange which could have a negative effect on the economy. As I said, it can affect people with fixed incomes. It could create asset bubbles, because the low level of interest rates over an extended period of time could result in the build-up of asset bubbles which, when they burst, you have the kind of meltdown that took place recently in 2008, where the global economy almost came to its knees because of the fact that you had a number of these, what became subprime mortgages then becoming a risk for the system as a whole.

So, the longer that interest rates remain low, of course, the greater the probability for asset price inflation, and there is also, of course, the probability of capital reallocation if interest rates globally were to rise, and that is something that we need to be mindful of and to take—certainly to have weapons in the Central Bank arsenal for them to be able to address these issues as they could potentially come up.

Of course, Mr. Vice-President, we have to recognize that the issue of excess liquidity and low interest rates is not a Trinidad and Tobago phenomenon. It is something that exists in a number of countries throughout the world; United States, in Europe and in a number of other countries, the whole question of where interest rates are right now. Perhaps one could consider it as being probably an area which is totally new to economic policy, where it is and where it has been for so long is something that we certainly have not seen for some time and certainly in Trinidad and Tobago, certainly has not characterized the environment of Trinidad and Tobago.

One of the big criticisms of Mr. Greenspan, when—he was at one stage considered, of course, the guru of all central bankers, and then once the global economy melted down, one of the big criticisms of Mr. Greenspan was that he had kept interest rates too low for too long and by keeping interest rates so low for so long, what it did for him—what it did was really create the expectation that interest rates would remain low and, therefore, one could take certain kinds of risks with respect to borrowing and with respect to the purchase of real assets, and people tended to think that that would now characterize the global economy going forward, and the resulting impact of that was, as we know, the economic crash which resulted from 2008.

In terms of our own market, Mr. Vice-President, surplus liquidity from the way the Central Bank checks it is about $6 billion. Surplus liquidity is actually much more than that from a banker's perspective. Bankers do not—the way Central Bank would measure it, would be different from the way a banker would measure it. Central Bank would measure it from the point of view of what is the surplus over the reserve requirement in the deposit accounts at the Central Bank. The bankers would look at it differently, in the sense that they would look at what do they have in the Central Bank account as well as what are their near cash assets, which would be all the other Treasury bills that would be held by banks over and above what is sold simply just for open market operations and which are therefore available to banks to lend. If we use that number, the number is, of course, much larger than the number which exists right now at the Central Bank in terms of the size of the build-up of liquidity in the system.

As I said, part of the reason for this build-up is, of course, the fiscal deficits which the Government has run since 2009. And a lot of these deficits are actually much smaller than—and is actually the numbers we read in the budget, the deficits tend to be, while we may give a figure in the budget, the actual expend over the past few years have tended to come in much below that number, so that overall the deficits have had an impact. Of course, the economic decline in the initial slow rate of growth is not picking up all of the liquidity in the way we would like. The cash surpluses, as I said, is being generated by private businesses which continue to be highly profitable, and, of course, the cash injections associated with the CL Financial failure, the injections which had to be made to meet a number of the expenses associated, and costs associated, and reimbursements to investors that were associated with the collapse of CL Financial, is something that we need to—which has also expanded the supply of money and has affected the economy as a whole.

Having said that, Mr. Vice-President, the point is that going forward, the potential for the build-up of liquidity, the surplus liquidity in the system and the effect of it on the economy as a whole is something that we need to be very mindful of and, therefore, we need to take into account. As I said, the economy has continued to grow, and I always congratulate my colleague, Minister Maharaj, the agricultural sector has shown four consecutive quarters of growth which is—[*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Maharaj: Yes, I know.

Hon. Senator: No other Minister cannot—[*Desk thumping and laughter*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Yeah, yeah.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: But overall, you know, when I look at the numbers, certainly the second quarter—up to the second quarter of this year, I have not seen the detailed numbers for the third quarter of this year, all of the sectors in the economy showed growth.

In the fourth quarter, of course, the difficulty we face is that the energy sector, preliminary figures that we have, would have shown a contraction of about 4 per cent in the energy sector, and that 4 per cent contraction can have a significant impact on the overall number for the economy as a whole, because energy accounts for 45 per cent. So, on a weighted average that would bring down the overall growth in the economy by 1.6 per cent and then it means, therefore, that if you look at the other 55 per cent of the economy, to offset that, would need to show growth of at least 3 per cent to offset—55 per cent of 3 per cent, less 1.6 would give you a sort of a breakeven position. Right? I do not want to go into those things. [*Interruption and laughter*] Yes, I do not want to go into those things here.

But, I just want to say that, the point is, that the third quarter, and the third quarter I just probably need to, Mr. Vice-President, just to say something about that. We had projected since last year, we knew that we had to do a significant turnaround in the energy sector and, again, I want to compliment here the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, because the Minister was able to coordinate the work in the energy sector in such a way that all of the major turnarounds that needed to take place were sheltered under this particular event that would have taken place offshore in terms of the turnaround that we needed to do.

Sen. Al-Rawi: The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs had nothing to do with that.

8.15 p.m.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Well, they would have had to—I mean, part of the discussions that the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs would have coordinated, but I do not want to suggest that the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs did not have anything to do with it either. The Minister did, in fact, coordinate the discussions with all of the parties to ensure that everyone, to the extent that it could happen, would have done their turnarounds within this umbrella that existed at the same time, so that you did not have the outages and the effect over a more extended period of time.

We have to give credit also to the industry because the original time frame for the work on this particular turnaround that had to be done was expected to be much longer. It was expected to go into October. In fact, it was shortened, and we were able to avoid all of the negative effects that could have actually occurred over that period of time.

So the thing is that, that turnaround in the sector, again, is not an economic policy issue, of course, because it was an engineering issue of a turnaround that needed to be done, and that turnaround had now been behind us, I expect that we would have shown—the performance of the economy for the third quarter will not be where we would have liked to see it. The non-energy sector, however, would have continued to be strong and very robust. The energy sector would have shown growth in the second quarter of 2.4 per cent overall, to give the overall 2.1 per cent for the second quarter. But that 2.4 per cent growth in the second quarter, we expect, would have continued in the third quarter. So the non-energy sector would have continued to remain fairly robust, the effect being offset by the fact that we had to do this major turnaround in the energy sector in the third quarter. So the numbers that we would see for the third quarter would not be as robust as we would have liked, but the economy itself has continued on a fairly strong position going forward.

So, Mr. President, the other issue that I think needs to be considered as part of this discussion is the fact that the recent numbers for inflation have shown inflation to be relatively subdued and have come down much faster than we had anticipated. The figure was 5.6 per cent, I think it was, for the second quarter and we expect that that number would have been—our preliminary number for the third quarter would have put us somewhere—for the nine months, would have put us somewhere around 3.1 per cent. [*Desk thumping*]

So there was a significant reduction in inflation over the period—[*Interruption*] Yes, food inflation did come down and that significantly contributed to the reduction. In fact, the figures for 2012, food inflation was 14.7 per cent and that came down to 3.7 per cent between September last year's numbers versus September this year's numbers. [*Desk thumping*] So there was quite a significant—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Well done! Well done! Food for all!

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Yes. There was quite a significant reduction in food inflation and that overall contributed to the reduction.

Sen. Singh: Performance beat old talk.

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: So the reduction in inflation suggests that there is no need immediately for the Central Bank to take aggressive action as far as monetary policy is concerned. But nevertheless, we need to make sure that we continue to give—or at least ensure that we give the Central Bank the tools that they need to deal with the economy as a whole.

Just in closing, Mr. Vice-President, I want to say, overall, the financial buffers that the country has, continue to remain strong. The Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, of course, has continued to grow. It crossed $5 billion during the last quarter. It is $5.1 billion, that is at the end of September of this year. And, of course, the foreign exchange reserves continue to remain fairly solid.

So overall, I think, from that point of view, the performance of the economy remains robust; it remains good. We have to ensure that the Central Bank has the tools that they need to be able to manage the economy well, and one aspect of these tools—it is not the only one and it is not necessarily the one they would use right away—that that is in place. We will be seeking to put that in place now and our expectation is that having come past the turnaround that needed to be done in the third quarter, we expect that this quarter should be fairly robust going forward and 2014 should reflect very strong growth which will ensure that the Central Bank itself needs to—for which reason the Central Bank needs to have these tools to ensure that as the economy starts to grow, if there are issues around the potential effect of the large overhang of surplus liquidity, that that could be brought under control relatively easily.

So with those short words, Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed.

Mr. Vice-President: At this stage, Senators who wish to contribute to the debate may do so.

Sen. Singh: On both Motions

Mr. Vice-President: On both Motions, sorry. May I take the opportunity to remind Senators that I have been informed that dinner is ready and you could go singularly, not to prevent the debate because of the late hours; you may do so. Sen. Henry, please. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. Lester Henry: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President, and comrade, for allowing me—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: One of the survivors. One of the survivors. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: As I said, I submitted my letter but they refused it.

Sen. Singh: Like Gloria Gaynor, "I would survive". [*Laughter*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Yes. Mr. Vice-President, we start this debate at a very late hour and I would like to be somewhat brief, but I want to state from the outset, the issue of excess liquidity and so on is a subject that I have a considerable in-depth knowledge of, so I could give a lecture here for the next two hours.

Hon. Senator: "Teach dem, man; teach dem."

Sen. George: One hour. One hour, not two.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: And by evidence of that—anyhow, I refer to my recent forthcoming paper in the *International Journal of Development Studies*—[*Desk thumping*]—with my colleagues from the university, and the title of the paper is: The Dynamics of Involuntary Commercial Bank Reserves in Trinidad and Tobago, which is the same thing as excess liquidity.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Excellent! Excellent! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Okay? Yes, I recommend that the Minister of Finance and the Economy get a copy of it. I will offer him some time later, to email a soft copy, or hard copy.

But before I get into the excess liquidity, the Minister made some very somewhat—[*Interruption*]

Sen. George: Will he get your autograph?

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Yes, I will autograph it.

Sen. George: All right. I want one.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: The Minister made some very strange comments about the economy, so I figure I will start off with dealing with that first and then get into the excess liquidly issues because I was a bit confused by some of the Minister's comments about the maintenance and the impact of the maintenance on the economy and the growth in the energy sector. Because clearly, something seems strange because if you look at the Monetary Policy Announcement, November 29, 2013—four days ago—issued by the Central Bank, the very first line of it reads:

"Planned large scale maintenance activity by the two major natural gas producers and coordinated maintenance shutdowns in the downstream industry in September severely contracted production throughout the energy sector..."

So in other words, it is not good news. It is bad. In fact, the contraction, they are suggesting, will severely hamper any positive performance in the third quarter of the economy because the impact is so significant, which is what we were expecting earlier in the year. So it should not be a significant surprise. So I do not know where the Minister is getting this good news from. Right.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Mr. Dookeran.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: And contrary to the Minister, the Central Bank is a little bit much more cautious. So the Central Bank suggests that the economy still remains on its path of slow but steady recovery. No reference to any growth. So where is this growth coming from? That is what the Central Bank is saying: slow but steady recovery. But of course, we have been hearing slow but steady recovery since 2010, and every time they boast about economic growth at one level, a few months after they talk about recovery again. You cannot have it both ways.

And on the issue of inflation, on page 3 of the Central Bank Monetary Announcement—because this is all coming from the same Government, the Central Bank. The decline in inflation was mainly due to a slowdown in core inflation. That is completely contrary to what the Minister just said. It is on page 3 of the Monetary Announcement just issued four days ago, on November 29.

So, I am not sure where this good news about the economy is coming from. Now, also, the Minister talked about the expansion in consumer lending, which we know is not really good news in and of itself as far as economic development is concerned. The real issue that you want to see in terms of job creation and really fostering economic growth is when you have credit expansion in the private sector, and the Central Bank—same Monetary Announcement on November 29—talked about 10 consecutive months of decline in business borrowing. So I do not see anything to shout about in that regard.

And, in particular, the Minister also referred to the fact that this Motion, which involves the liquidity absorption measures by the Central Bank in terms of Treasury Bills, Treasury Notes, will have the impact of raising interest rates. And when you raise interest rates, of course, the Minister points out on the upside, is that people on pension—fixed incomes and so on—might get a benefit, but on the

other hand, you have the potential to choke off even further, business borrowing. So you might actually hinder the little modicum of economic growth that you boast about. Because if the private sector is not borrowing at such low interest rates as they are doing now, will they borrow more when interest rates go up, Mr. Vice-President? It does not seem very likely.

8.30 p.m.

So what we have if the private sector credit is not expanding—in fact, contracting for 10 consecutive months, what we have is the economy strictly being driven by Government spending; the billions of dollars that you spend. And to say that the deficit turns out to be smaller than you projected in the initial budget statement, is not necessarily the key point. The point is that you are spending large amounts of money and these fiscal injections are the most significant source of excess liquidity in the system.

Now, let me turn to the issue directly in terms of excess liquidity. I will not go through my full paper as I said, but what we know about excess liquidity—and by the way, Mr. Minister, on November 29 the Central Bank itself did not report $6 billion as excess liquidity, "eh".

Sen. Howai: Sorry about that.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: They reported:

> "…liquidity levels began to climb back up during the period November 1—November 22, 2013…"

That is just last month and it averaged $7.8 billion daily; not $6 billion. So that means if you talked about the Central Bank saying $6 billion, it is not. It is 7.8 in the monetary policy.

Sen. Howai: That is from 8th September

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: No! What?

Sen. Howai: September.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Oh, you are talking about—well, I am updating you then. Okay? So November 1—November 22, excess liquidity averaged $7.8 billion daily. So that means the commercial banks measure will probably be $9 billion or $10 billion.

Sen. Howai: That is right.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Right. So at least we agree on that. Okay? So, yes, that is the problem.

So the excess liquidity problem is haunting you and haunting this economy in a very significant way, much more significant than the $6 billion you mentioned. And, of course, in my work we find that the contraction in private sector borrowing and the addition of fiscal injections are two of the main drivers of the excess liquidity and, of course, that continues to plague this Government since 2010, the lack of confidence in the economy and people just holding on to their position. As the Minister himself pointed out, we have the situation where people are just plowing some money back into their business and so on. They are not really going out there and driving to create new businesses and increase business borrowing, which is what you want to see and that is what happens when people have confidence.

Now, let me just speak a few minutes in terms of where this excess liquidity issue really fits in terms of where excess liquidity comes from. Now, as I said, the number one problem. The Minister mentioned it last, conveniently, but it is really the number one problem, the fiscal injections that come from money generated from the energy sector.

So, the fact that you choose to run budget deficit and spend a whole large sum of money, should not be taken as a given. The point is that if you generate a lot of money because of higher than average revenue from the energy sector, higher oil prices which you have been fortunate to have for the three and a half years in Government—you have had very good oil prices and actually very good natural gas prices compared to what was budgeted. So the prices have always come in above budgeted.

You have never had to deal with the situation where energy prices ended up below budgeted for this Government. You have never had to face that situation. You have always been above. Okay? And in spite of that, you spend all that money that come above budget and then you come and borrow more. As we keep reminding you as you remind us very often, you called what was done in the last administrations squandermania. When budgets were $40 billion, $35 billion and $30 billion and so on, you were screaming up and down all over the country.

Sen. Al-Rawi: That is right.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: You come with $58 billion-61 billion budgets and you have no shame.

Sen. Cudjoe: No shame. None!

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Lawless! They could bring she back and replace you, you know.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: That is all right. And since the budget—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Cudjoe: We want Christlyn Moore.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: And you have gone on a massive—or that reminds me, that you have gone on a massive borrowing spree and you have ramped it up since the loss in the local government and the St. Joseph by-election. [*Interruption*] No. The amount of money that you have spent and have so little economic growth to show for it, is an international embarrassment. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senator: "Aaaaa."

Hon. Senator: I like that one.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: No, I mean, I find it amazing that you could spend so much money and struggle to get 1. or .0 per cent growth and come and boast about it. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Cudjoe: Shame.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: In the earlier part of the last decade, budgets of $35 billion and $34 billion and so on were correspondent with 8/9 per cent economic growth. Not that that is the only driver of economic growth, but it is a significant driver in an economy such as ours. [*Interruption*] No, because you are spending in unproductive ways. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Cudjoe: True.

Sen. Al-Rawi: That is right.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: That is the only logical explanation. You are engaging in a massive amount of unproductive spending, and if you look at the budget figures you could see it for yourself. Where is the spending going? All kinds of strange schemes and—well, I will not go into the details because that will take me off on another tangent. But seriously, that is the only logical explanation as to why you cannot generate the significant amount of growth given the quantum of Government spending.

Sen. Cudjoe: They do not care about that. One hit one—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Howai: We will give you a copy of this.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Yes, but it is why—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Cudjoe: Do not waste your time on them.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: It is social programmes and transfers over 50 per cent of your budget. You moved it from 30 per cent, to over 50 per cent. [*Crosstalk*]

So, Mr. Vice-President, excess liquidity comes from, of course, one again, fiscal injections. It could also come from money laundering. One of the key sources of excess liquidity in many countries is people trying to get rid of illicit funds and, of course, any kind of foreign exchange inflows could also create problems especially in a small economy with a limited absorption capacity.

Now, we also have—what sometimes in some cases creates excess liquidity is the expansion of credit to the banking system and the fact that we do not have proper developed capital markets and so on. So the money just tends to be piled up there. But there is another significant reason that might be appropriate in our situation, that is, the fact that commercial banks tend to hold excess liquidity, sometimes in some instances, to offset potential loan losses. If they think the economy is fragile and you might have an increase in nonperforming loans in any drastic way, they want to be prepared. So it is what we call precautionary excess liquidity.

So, we have a situation here in Trinidad where this excess liquidity—of course, it started with the downturn in 2009, but in recent years it has skyrocketed to unprecedented levels and we want to know what is really going on here. The simple answer is that we are still locked in the mode of low confidence in this economy, and we have outlined the reasons from the first budget, the first debate in this Senate. When you came in 2010 you started to bad-mouth the economy, you started to cry wolf and we warned you that if you keep saying the economy is in trouble, we are in precipice and all kind of crazy language, you frighten investors and yet you kept doing it.

Sen. Al-Rawi: That is right.

Hon. Senator: Reckless.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Because it seemed as though at that time—and you did not realize that you were the Government, that you cannot bad talk the economy while you are in the Government. It took you several years to start fudging some kind of halfway positive comments about the economy.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Not you, "eh", Kevin.

Sen. Cudjoe: And three Ministers of Finance.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: And three—[*Laughter*] It took you a while to realize that—at least this Minister of Finance and the Economy is trying to scrape up something that sounding positive. I mean, he has a tough task—

Hon. Senator: "All yuh talkin big, eh."

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: He has a tough task because the reality on the ground is that nothing is happening. [*Crosstalk*] Very, very tough task, and by the way, you are on such a borrowing spree. [*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: TV6 fired Dianne Baldeosingh.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: You had the bond issues—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: They did not get her resignation.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry:—several major bond issues in recent times and we know about the City Bank bond pending for US $500 million—that is on the cards—plus your NIPDEC bond and your UDeCoTT bond pending for a billion dollars. So, my problem is, what are you doing with all this borrowing?

If you are not going to borrow to spend, to add more excess liquidity to the system, what are you doing? What are you borrowing the money for? So clearly if you are going to borrow all this money, my count over the last couple of months up to about $6 billion, you cannot tell me you are going to borrow that just to park it up somewhere. You are borrowing it to spend, and that way you are going to compound your excess liquidity problem.

Sen. Howai: That is why we are doing excess liquidity.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: "Yeh", but not enough. I will get to that. But seriously, we know that you are going to spend and create another big excess liquidity in the system because for now we know that you are already getting into your election mode, you are going to borrow $2.7 billion for PURE programmes or something like that, you are borrowing another billion to outfit the campus supposedly—the campus centre across the road there—and unspecified use of that US $500 million or that is over TT $3 billion.

One of the things that I am hearing about that particular bond issue is that the interest rate that you are looking to settle at—of course, the final interest rate would not be until you actually do the issue, but it is sounding like 200 basis points above the benchmark, which is the US 30-year treasury and I am warning the country again, that this does not smell good. There is some concern that you are paying too much interest for that City Bank bond—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Like Petrotrin bonds.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: "Yeh!"—and there is no logical explanation as to why you would give it directly to City Bank only, not even having a tender and then paying above market interest rates on the bond. By that time it should be out when we do

the finance Bill, and I will say more on that by January or so. So, you have been going on a massive borrowing spree, clearly in an attempt, once again, to try and buy an election due in 15 months—"eh"?

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: Which election?

Sen. Al-Rawi: Due in 15 months.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: The one due in 15 months. You are going to spend.

Sen. Singh: I checking the PNM—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Clearly, why are you borrowing all the money? What is your borrowing plan? The Minister did not outline any borrowing plan. Yet, you claim that you are going to bring down the deficit and all your plans are about borrowing and spending.

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: [*Inaudible*] congratulated you, but I tell him he make a mistake.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Oh yeah. So you are not going to spend? [*Laughter*] You are going to seriously watch me and say—so what are you borrowing the money for? You usurp the role of the Minister of Finance and the Economy and give me an explanation. What are you doing with the $6 billion?

Sen. Dr. Tewarie: The Minister of Finance and the Economy can speak for himself.

Sen. Howai: Yes.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Well, he is right here.

Sen. Cudjoe: He will have a chance to speak later.

Sen. Maharaj: Direct your comments to the Chair.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: And my honourable comrade.

Hon. Senator: Where is your leader?

8.45 p.m.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Yes. So again, you have no borrowing plan and all of your language is contradictory. Right?

Sen. Cudjoe: Where is yours? [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry:—because you will end up spending huge amounts of money. [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Now, on the issue of the—I would not be much longer but I have to make a serious point in terms of the Motion, the serious Motion. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Senator: "Camille go be there, doh worry."

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Yeah. The issue of the Treasury Bill limits to manage the liquidity, now, I have no problem in understanding the basic idea behind it, it is solid; there is nothing wrong with the idea of increasing the limit. In fact, I might be even willing to support an abolishing of the limit, Mr. Minister of Finance and the Economy, that abolishing the requirement to come to Parliament to raise the limit, I could even support that. [*Crosstalk*] I could support that. [*Continuous crosstalk*] No, no, let me finish.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Affirmative resolution.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: No, let me finish—no, because there was some question as to whether this Motion in the Senate is necessary all together. I know you probably choose to do it for the reason you just outlined [*Crosstalk*] but there was some issue because I read somewhere where it was not even necessary to bring this to the Senate. Okay?

Sen. Al-Rawi: I will deal with that [*Inaudible*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Yeah. All right. So yes, I may even be willing to support the idea that you do not even have to come to the Senate to do this or the Parliament in general—the Lower House or Upper House—and you have—in other words, there would be no limit to what the Central Bank can go up to in terms of mopping up liquidity in issuing Treasury Bills, and of course, the Treasury Bill issue is much more preferable to the long-term bonds and so on which tie you into an interest rate structure, so that is why Central Banks tend to prefer the Treasury Bill option rather—because of the short-term thing.

But, what I would require in the case of if we agree, sometime down the road, to remove the limits on borrowing for liquidity management is that I would require that the Central Bank provide reports to the Parliament [*Continuous crosstalk*] on a bi-annual or semi or quarterly basis [*Laughter*] in terms of what is happening in terms of their use of Treasury Bills, and in that way, we might be able to have the same kind of debate, but the debate would not be centred on the limits in terms of whether it is $15 billion or $20 billion or so on. [*Continuous crosstalk and interruption*]

So, I might be willing to—[*Crosstalk*] I will be willing—well, in that case, I will be returning the favour. So, in terms of the measure, given what I have outlined in terms of you are going to create much more excess liquidity in the months ahead, so there might be a case for abolishing the requirement to come to

Parliament to raise the limit, but I would insist that the Central Bank be required in such a case to provide quarterly or semi-annual accounts to the Parliament as to what is actually happening with the Treasury Bills, with their use of Treasury Bills. And we know the Minister himself pointed out that these funds are sterilized and put in blocked accounts. Okay?

Now, my concern with that is, would we ever run into a situation where the Government goes into the blocked accounts, because when you have a politically appointed Central Bank Governor, anything is possible.

Sen. Hinds: "Woooo!" [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Sen. Maharaj: That is your track record, not ours. When you were appointed as a Senator [*Inaudible*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: And given what we have seen over the past year and plus that this particular sitting Governor has done I do not have any confidence.

Sen. Cudjoe: Hmm. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Ramnarine: "No confidence and yuh still quoting from his report."

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: None, none. Absolutely none!

Hon. Senator: "So why yuh quoting from the report for?" [*Laughter*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Because—

Sen. Maharaj: "And yuh quoting from him." You confused [*Inaudible*] [*Laughter*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: You pay attention conveniently.

Hon. Senators: Ahhhh! Ohhhh!

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: I said this is your Government saying this.

Hon. Senators: Ohhhh! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Hinds: Ahhhh! [*Laughter*]

Sen. Cudjoe: "He was on de phone! Yuh was on the phone! Excuse him, he was on de phone."

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: I said this is yours when I held it up.

Sen. Hinds: "He is under the influence ah Sat Maharaj." [*Laughter*]

Sen. Maharaj: "You under the influence of you?"

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: And contradicting—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, please allow the Senator to make his contribution. [*Continuous crosstalk and laughter*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: I made it quite clear, I saw no difference between the Central Bank and the Government.

Sen. Hinds: "He suffering from Sat."

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Yes, so do not—yeah, anyhow. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Maharaj: Come back to your point.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Yes.

Sen. Maharaj: Do not be distracted.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Yes. So I quoted what your Government-appointed Central Bank Governor was saying in here. In other words, I used your own stick to beat you, "yuh have ah problem with dat?"

Hon. Senators: Ohhhh!

Sen. Ramnarine: Who appointed the previous Central Bank Governor? The tooth fairy?

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Yeah. [*Crosstalk*] Okay, so that is what I am warning about in the sense that the Central Bank having the ability to absorb liquidity is not an issue, we understand that, right, but what I want to stress is, therefore, the fact that the money is parked in blocked accounts at the Central Bank, and it is generally unthinkable that a Central Bank Governor would allow the Government access to blocked accounts, but with this particular Government—

Sen. Hinds: Anything goes.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry:—anything goes. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Hinds: You are an economist, man, "he is ah banker", teach him.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Anything goes!

Sen. Cudjoe: True!

Sen. Hinds: Teach him! UWI economist!

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: You see, I told you before, you tend to normalize madness.

Sen. Al-Rawi: Nice one! [*Desk thumping*] Normalizing madness! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: And you make it appear normal.

Hon. Senator: On that side, everybody does not! [*Laughter*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: It is all normal opposite.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Because, I mean, I know what is going on at the Central Bank, I know. It is becoming another HDC where failed people go and get jobs.

Sen. Hinds: Ahhhhh! [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Senators: "Oooooh!" [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Hinds: The Minister of Finance and the Economy nodding. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Howai: [*Inaudible*] You cannot say that!

Sen. Al-Rawi: Why?

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Why not?

Sen. Howai: About the Governor.

Sen. Hinds: Who said that? He did not say that. "He say people."

Sen. Al-Rawi: "Is HDC he talking about."

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: I said HDC.

Sen. Cudjoe: "Yuh see, dey not listening, they paying attention conveniently."

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Yes.

Sen. Hinds: Atrius too!

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: So, Mr.President—yes! [*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Atrius could never work! [*Laughter*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Yeah, we know of the people who are getting $84,000 a month under dubious contracts and so on—

Sen. Cudjoe: Wow! Wow! What have we!

Hon. Senators: Ahhhh! [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry:—at the Central Bank [*Crosstalk*] becoming "ah" kind of DEWD. [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Sen. Cudjoe: "Yuh hearing 84, 84, 84." [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: [*Inaudible*] unqualified friends and family getting jobs at the Central Bank just like that.

Sen. Maharaj: "Why yuh doh say it outside the Parliament."

Mr. Vice-President: Senators, please, please, look at the hour, allow the Senator to continue his contribution. Thank you.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: And decisions being made purely on the basis of politics, and so on, we know that—

Sen. Maharaj: "Nah, say it outside; say it outside!"

Sen. Dr. L. Henry:—you cannot hide. [*Crosstalk*] By the way, Mr. Minister, you see the workers protesting about Atrius yesterday and today. If you had listened to me two weeks ago—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. Singh: "Yuh putting politics on it!"

Sen. Cudjoe: "Um-hmm!"

Sen. Singh: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry:—you could have avoided such embarrassment.

Sen. Cudjoe: Yes.

Sen. Howai: It is not embarrassment.

Sen. Cudjoe: "Dey doh care about that."

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: And we have not forgotten one Mr. Subhas Gosine, as well "eh". The Atrius—

Sen. Howai: That is their right.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry:—who you claimed to be an actuary.

Sen. Hinds: Yes.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: "We still waiting to see the certificate."

Sen. Hinds: Yes.

Sen. Cudjoe: [*Laughter*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Okay.

Sen. Howai: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. Hinds: "It was ah mistake." The Government [*Inaudible*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: What! It was on "dey" website for months.

Sen. Howai: We withdrew the "am"—

Sen. Hinds: You withdrew it?

Sen. Al-Rawi: "It was ah misprint?"

Sen. Howai: "Ah misprint!" Yeah, that. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Did he ever provide any certificate of any kind?

Sen. Singh: Mistakes can happen.

Sen. Cudjoe: "This Government is ah mistake!"

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: No, no, we are not accepting that explanation of any mistake, we want to see the certificates.

Sen. Hinds: We want to see it now. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: "Sell that to little children and take their biscuits." [*Laughter*]

Mr. Vice-President: Senator, please, could you stick to the Motion at hand, please, to the debate and such. Thank you. [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Sen. Hinds: We went through that with Resmi!

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Coming from the honourable—yeah

Hon. Senator: What! [*Laughter*]

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: So yes, do not just come and assert that somebody has the required credentials, we want proof, you know, we do not trust you.

Sen. Singh: You remember Winston Ali?

Sen. Hinds: "Yeah", he killed himself.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: "I doh know."

Sen. Singh: That is the locus classicus of plagiarism.

Sen. Dr. L. Henry: Okay. So, given that we started this debate so late, I will just remind this honourable Senate and the public at large of my main issues. Even though on the surface of it, this Motion is relatively straightforward in terms of giving the Central Bank the ability to mop up liquidity, the consequences of

this could be that it could further dampen business expansion as interest rates rise—that is the downside; the Minister stressed the upside in terms of pensioners and people on fixed income getting some kind of interest and so on. I know that low interest rates for long periods are particular problems for places that do not take long-term deposits like insurance companies, and, you know, certain mutual funds and so on. Right. So that could be—we understand the problem that could create. It is creating a problem in England; it is creating a problem in America as well. All right? But we have to be careful as well that we do not choke off any increase—any potential increase—in the private sector borrowing, because we have seen that it is actually going the wrong way.

Again, continued massive fiscal injections which we expect from this Government and they have us wanting—in all the crosstalk, you have not denied it, will not help the situation. The massive amount of borrowing without any clear plan outlined in terms of how you are going to move towards that—bringing down the deficits and coming back into balance, and, again, does not bode well for the future economic management of the country. And again, my suggestion is that we could even consider removing the requirement of having a limit on liquidity absorption measures, but on the condition that the Central Bank reports its activity to the Parliament on a regular basis, perhaps quarterly or semi-annually so that we could monitor what is actually happening when that money is sterilized, and remove any potential avenue for a Government that could find itself in trouble, breaking into that because they have a cooperative Central Bank Governor.

With these few words, Mr. Vice-President, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Well said!

Mr. President: Sen. Ramkhelawan.

Sen. Subhas Ramkhelawan: Thank you, Mr. Vice-President, as I rise to join in debating these joint Motions; first, to increase the limit on Treasury Notes, and secondly, to increase the limits on Treasury Bills. But, before I do so, Mr. Vice-President, I think it is important to enjoin the citizens of this country in this debate because, as I was coming to Parliament, certain people asked me: What is that debate really about? What is this thing about increasing the Treasury Notes limit or the Treasury Bills limit? So I want to start with your permission to paint a backdrop and a picture of what this debate is really about.

First of all, it is to increase the limit on Treasury Bills from a figure of $15 million to a figure of $30 billion, and to increase the limit on Treasury Notes from $5 billion to $15 billion. Many citizens are asking, "Well, what are Treasury

Notes and what are they used for and so on? I should say as a starting point that these Treasury pieces of legislation—if you want to call them that—really constitute a trilogy of legislation that is aimed for the Government of the day to really give support to the Central Bank in its initiatives to ensure that there is some level of monetary control, and, by extension, price stability and some management of inflation, and it is more than that.

So, there are three pieces of legislation by which the Government, in some shape or form, is assisting the Central Bank. The Treasury Bills provide that the Government can borrow money, issue bills and essentially borrow money or take money out of the system, sterilize that money, and when they take money out of the system by selling Treasury Bills, they put that money into the Central Bank, and, in a sense, those funds are frozen. But Treasury Bills are only for a period of up to one year under the Treasury Bills legislation. By the way, that piece of legislation was the first in that trilogy—the Treasury Bills legislation was enacted, if my memory serves me right, sometime in 1960, and over time, the limit grew as our economy grew and the need to manage liquidity on a larger scale would have grown.

9.00 p.m.

And so, we are moving now from a figure of $15 billion to the proposed figure in this Motion of $30 billion. And I want to put it in the context of what is happening in other areas.

The second area is that of Treasury Notes. And the Treasury Notes really apply to the borrowing by Government to assist the Central Bank, again in managing liquidity. But those borrowings are different from that of Treasury Bills in that the term of the borrowing could go as long as five years as opposed to being within one year.

[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

And there is a third part of this trilogy, Mr. President, and welcome back. There is a third part of this trilogy and that third part—the Treasury Note legislation came about in about 1995, after the Treasury Bill legislation in 1960, so this is 35 years later we are using a second Treasury measure, if you will, by the Government, to support the Central Bank. And the third piece of legislation, which is not for debate today, but really makes up the overall package of Treasury-type legislation, is that of Treasury Bonds. And in 2008, the then Minister of Finance came to this Senate, and of course to the House, to put in place a Treasury Bonds Act.

And the difference between Treasury Bills, Treasury Notes, and Treasury Bonds is that the Treasury Bonds Act provides for a borrowing as far out as ten years. So these are the three pieces of legislation. Now, some of the differences, apart from the maturity of the paper that is being issued to essentially pull money out of the system, is that, in the case of the Bills, there is the need for a resolution to lift the borrowing ceiling. And I am, of course, not in agreement with Sen. Henry when he makes the point that we should allow the Central Bank to do, basically, whatever it wants because it does not have the authority to borrow.

The Central Bank does not have the authority to borrow under Treasury Bills or Bonds. So the Central Bank has authority to do other things under its legislation, but it is a collaboration of sorts between the Government and the Central Bank for monetary management, if you will. So, it is required under the Treasury Bills Act that whenever the ceiling must be raised, it must be raised by resolution, because remember it is a Government borrowing.

The second thing is—and that holds true also in Treasury Notes. Whenever that ceiling has to be lifted, it must be done because the borrowing is by the Government and it is the Minister of Finance and the Economy who delegates some of his responsibilities to the Central Bank in that case.

Now, the third part of the trilogy is one that really confuses me, because I had serious objection to the issue of Treasury Bonds when it was passed in 2008, but it only requires a simple majority. The Treasury Bonds, unlike the Notes and the Bills, do not have a requirement that the Government would need to come back to the Parliament to increase limits, because there are no limits on Treasury Bonds. The Act, in 2008, did not specify any limits, and therefore, to me, it is a lacuna in what we are doing, in that a Government can, in fact, borrow to higher levels without necessarily having to come back to the Parliament. And I believe it is something that ought to be addressed.

So these are the three pieces of legislation where the Government, essentially, works in collaboration with the Central Bank in terms of the question of liquidity management. Now, the Central Bank, of course, has its own measures which it can take on its own volition. And that first part of it is really the application of a reserve on the deposits within the banking system. And, over time, in order to manage this liquidity, the Central Bank, if my recollection is correct, has applied a level of 17 per cent on deposits raised within the banking system. So that for every dollar raised by the banks, 17 cents is taken by the Central Bank and put aside, as reserve in, essentially, an account which cannot be touched by the banks.

And in a similar way, since the Central Bank is banker to banks as well as banker to the Government, this reserve is set aside and cannot be touched. But here is the problem. The problem is that international agencies are not in favour of the application of growing reserves, or Primary Reserves, as they are called, and so, at a level of 17 per cent, other measures are being used now to mop up this liquidity.

Mr. President, I am sure that you would have heard or read in several reports over the past couple years that there is excess liquidity in the system. And what does that mean? It means that the banks—taken from the perspective of the banks—have raised more money, via deposits and other fundraising mechanisms, than they can actually lend. And so, what happens is with all of this money slopping about, there would be a number of concerns that the price of money would get too cheap, when supply and demand are out of sync, and there is more supply than demand, then there is this concern and question that—will money get so easy to borrow? Will it be so accommodative in the wrong sectors? The Central Bank, of course, would want to make sure that in this kind of situation, there is some sort of balance or there is the management of some sort of target in the context of how much money there is in the system.

So, we have been reading recently that we have $6 billion in excess liquidity in the system, and this, Mr. President, is over and beyond the measures that have already been taken to mop up so-called liquidity in the system. One, by the application of a Primary Deposit Reserve, now at 17 per cent, and if we accept what the Minister of Finance and the Economy has said, that there is some $93 billion of deposits in the system and you apply 17 per cent to that, what you know is that about $16 billion is held, of bank deposits, by the Central Bank and it is, in a sense frozen and not allowed for further lending.

So I come to this second level, or this support that we are debating today. As it stands now, the Treasury Bill limit has been reached, has been—$15 billion has already been reached. I think the figure is about $15.2 billion, as we speak, based on information that I have seen in the statistics. And the Treasury Note limit of $5 billion has already been reached. So there is no additional capacity for the Central Bank to mop up any of this excess liquidity in the system. And therefore the Government again is now called in to assist. I see Sen. Henry agreeing with me for once.

Sen. Dr. Henry: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan: So—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Dr. Henry: Those particular tools.

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan: Those are the tools I am speaking about. So what we are debating today is to lift that limit, in the case of Treasury Bills, which is for the borrowing by the Government of one year money and putting it into the Central Bank to essentially cause it to be frozen or blocked. And what we are also debating is—so that limit moving from $15 billion to $30 billion; and in the case of Notes, moving from $5 billion to $15 billion. On aggregate then, Mr. President, that figure would be another $25 billion that we are talking about. Fifteen in the case of Treasury Bills, that is one year money; and 10 in the case of Treasury Notes, that is money where the Government could borrow, by issuing paper, up to five years.

So the question is: is it necessary at one fell swoop to increase this limit from a doubling in the case of Bills and 200 per cent in the case of Notes? Is it necessary? And when one looks at what is happening, if the surplus is $6 billion or $7 billion, I want to ask the question: why is it necessary that the limits should jump to such extensive levels in the context of the current situation? Because we have been going along a particular route where, over time, the Bill levels, the Treasury Bill levels have been going up but going up almost, I would say, in tandem with the needs that we foresee; whether it be for one year or two years.

And so it is when we started to use Notes, a similar situation developed. Why? And I would like to raise this question with the Minister of Finance and the Economy. Why so much in this period of time? Now, one is not arguing that the limits should not be raised. One is asking the question, why should the limits be raised to such an extent when no clear justification has been made for that immediate need? [*Desk thumping*] So if you have $5 billion or $6 billion in excess liquidity, why do you need $25 billion in limit in one fell swoop? And I would very much appreciate if the Minister of Finance and the Economy can answer that question, because it is the Parliament that has to approve the increase in limits, and the Parliament must have a good understanding of why it is so doing.

So, that is the question in terms of monetary management and I hope that that clarifies the mix that we are looking at, initiatives that can be taken by the Central Bank on its own, with regard to the Deposit Reserve, the Primary Deposit Reserve and what used to be called Secondary Reserves in terms of a collaboration with the Government, to ensure that additional moneys that need to be locked away, would in fact be locked away. And the Minister of Finance and the Economy did make the point that these funds are not counted as incremental borrowing by the Government, because on the one hand you have a debit and you have a credit at the same time. So you are borrowing money and you are putting it as a deposit with the Central Bank.

So, in a sense it might be neutralized. The question is: what is the Central Bank paying to Government? If Government is borrowing at, well in the case of Treasury Bills, you might be paying 15 basis points at this point in time; for three and six month money 20 basis points. That is .2 per cent. What is the Central Bank paying back to Government? Or else there might be a gap in terms of the cost of money and the return. But in the case of Bonds—I will digress a bit, Mr. President—in 2008, and I have raised this with the hon. Minister, in 2008 we used Treasury Bonds as a monetary mechanism, or measure, and borrowed $1 billion at 8.25 per cent. And that money was then put into a blocked account, as part of the Consolidated Fund and hangs there at a time when we are borrowing $6 billion and $7 billion outside of some of these measures. So I think we need to do some sort of rationalization. I am, of course, against—I am against Treasury Bonds in a developing economy like ours. But put that to the side.

9.15 p.m.

I want to turn now to some other questions which have come up over time, in terms of the monetary side. And that is the question of inflation. I heard the Minister speak to inflation, that is headline inflation, being 5.6 per cent and on the way down.

But we know that there are three parts that make up this headline inflation. One is food prices are coming down and I am a bit reticent to give the full credit for the food prices coming down to the Minister of Food Production. He is not solely responsible for that. When the price of grain comes down, the Minister of Food Production cannot take responsibility for that. If he takes responsibility in some measured way for food crops, vegetables coming down, I will say: "Okay, take that, hon. Minister." But when he starts to talk about the price of meat, beef, lamb, goat; when he starts to talk about the price of beans, lentils, red beans and so on, I will say to the hon. Minister he is not responsible for that because our food bill is $4 billion. And when the Minister talks about the growth in food production, I come back to my hobby horse, which is agriculture contributes 0.6 per cent of GDP and we still have—and I am waiting a full explanation from him—47,000 acres of land lying fallow.

Sen. Maharaj: "Yuh was absent during the budget."

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan: We still have 47,000 acres of lands.

Sen. Maharaj: "Yuh wasn' in the room. Yuh walk out."

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan: So if there is one exhortation I have for the Minister, when he is explaining he would want to say—that is the Minister of Food Production, or the Minister of Finance and the Economy, through the hon. Minster of Food

Production—what is happening to that food production. And I know the Minister of Food Production did go on a visit to Guyana to lock in a lease for 10,000 acres of lands—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Maharaj: "Ah went and check family."

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan:—and I want to say to him that, you know, nearest to church furthest from God. Mr. President, I have learnt.

Hon. Senator: Wicked!

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan: So, if it is not 47, or it is 46.5—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Maharaj: "It mus be zero."

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan:—or it is 30, it is not zero.

Sen. Maharaj: "Ah tell yuh is zero."

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan: It is not zero because I drive up and down.

Sen. Maharaj: Those lands are leased.

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan: The lands are lying fallow. I did not say that the lands were or were not leased. I am saying they are not under production.

Sen. Maharaj: "Cyah take back people land."

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan:—and if you get that production going, when you do that, I will be the first to applaud. Because it is my nature to applaud the increased production of food but do not come to this Parliament and try to pull the wool over our collective eyes—[*Desk thumping*]—and talk about that we have had four quarters of growth and all of those things and we have a $4 billion deficit, in terms of food importation. [*Crosstalk*] And he is my very good friend. The Minister is my very good friend but when we are talking the people's business, and the country's business we have to keep some distance.

Sen. Singh: You have to respond to him and give him back good.

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan: And I would like him to respond.

Sen. Maharaj: "Ah trying" to get him to [*Inaudible*] later.

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan: I was on the point of inflation. So that the question of food inflation, I repeat, is really outside of the Minister's hands, when you talk about the overall food bill. Short crops are a small component. Meat, beans, rice, flour, salt fish, these are the big things on the agenda.

The other part of it is energy, in the mix of inflation and I have said this before. And we have been subsidizing energy prices to our peril and to the chagrin of our children and their children to come because what we are doing is we are spending what should be their savings for the future. And so energy does not really come fully into the basket because it is subsidized. What remains? Core inflation and most of that comes, really, from outside.

We do not make fridges, we do not make cars. We do not produce some of those goods that will constitute the core of it. So, I am not in the mood today to give credit where credit is not due. Because credit is not due, as far as that is concerned. We are like a boat—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: Whether credit is due or not, that is the reality.

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan:—and what will happen, hon. Minister, is when those prices start to change, you start to blame the situation in the outside world.

Sen. Singh: We never took credit for it. We just stated the reality.

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan: Well, the reality is that the credit is not yours. That is the reality.

Sen. Singh: He claimed it?

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan: Yes he has.

Sen. Singh: He did not claim it.

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan: Yes he has. Go back into the *Hansard*.

Sen. Singh: He stated it.

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan: Go back into the *Hansard*. He has claimed that inflation, he has brought down inflation.

Sen. Al-Rawi: That is right.

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan: And so, let us not mince our words too much.

I want to turn from inflation to the question of growth in credit. The hon. Minister has spoken about the concerns, which we all share, about growth in credit, and in particular lack of growth in credit in that all-important segment, which is the business credit, which has been falling. Business credit has been falling. And why is that? Business credit has been falling because investors in Trinidad and Tobago are not seeing investment opportunities where positive returns can be had. That can be the only explanation or reason. And part of that is because the level of economic growth that is required, which might be 3 per cent-plus, is not being achieved.

Now I am not, in this case hon. Minister, blaming anybody. I am making a statement of fact that one of the things we need to do is to get growth going again to a level that will encourage businessmen to invest. Because once you get that growth going, I have said it before and I will say it again, it does not matter what the cost of financing is. What matters is that you can get a positive return on your investment, taking into consideration the cost of financing. So if interest rates were 40 per cent, that will be a matter for the Central Bank, in terms of managing the price of money, but for the investor, if he can earn 50 per cent and pay 40 per cent, that is a going deal. And so the problem is that we are not seeing, our investment community is not seeing sufficient investment propositions to cause them to invest and that is what is happening, in terms of business credit.

And so when we talk about the Central Bank applying an accommodative policy on interest rates, again, we have to look at ourselves and say: "Well, if we look at this question of an accommodative policy on interest rates, we have to look at some of the existing factors." I am sure my colleague will talk about the discount rates, and so on. But I want to pick one which is the repo rate.

The repo rate, at 275 or 250—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Two seventy-five.

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan:—it is artificial. It is artificial because banks can borrow from one another at far cheaper rates. But they do not need to borrow because they are all in surplus. But if one was not in surplus, they can borrow from one another in the interbank market at cheaper rates than the repo rate. So there is something fundamentally wrong in some of our management processes. That is the point that I am making; something fundamentally wrong in how we measure the whole process that we are going through.

So, I applaud the Minister, in terms of the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund, a growth is taking place. Some may argue that it has not reached the kind of levels that it should. I would argue that half a loaf is better than none in these circumstances. The foreign exchange reserves level, good. Whether it is 12 months or 13 months, we do have a very strong level of reserves.

I would differ from the Minister when he speaks to the question of liquidity in some of the developed countries, as opposed to that they have similar problems as us. We are trying to pull money out of the system, which is we are actually, by lifting this limit, the Government will sell securities: bonds, bills, notes. They will take the money received and put it in the Central Bank and lock it away. The situation in the US is different. They are pumping liquidity into the system, the

Central Bank, at a rate of $85 billion a month because they want to make sure that there is sufficient liquidity in the system. So we are operating on basically different sides of the plain. We have a problem which is too much liquidity. And always the matter is about balance. So we have a problem which is too much liquidity, too little investment taking place to mop up that liquidity, probably not a high enough level of investable opportunities and business confidence.

They have a problem that they need to keep the wheels turning by pumping liquidity in the system so that people can access moneys to borrow and to invest. Some would argue that it is going into the wrong hands but the point is that theirs is a reverse to our situation.

So, my one question is: Why do we need the extensive limit? Because if we do not, maybe the figure should be lower, both in the case of Treasury Bills, as well as in the case of Treasury Bonds; that we should take a more measured approach, in terms of increasing our limits. So that we can come back and report to the Parliament. I am on a different side of the fence from my colleague, Sen. Henry. I am on the side of the fence that you need to report to the people your borrowings or their borrowings and, therefore, it is necessary to adjust the limits in such a way that it will require you to come back and report.

In the Treasury Bonds Act is a different matter. There is the requirement for the Minister to report semi-annually, since there are no limits. There is a requirement for him to report semi-annually to the Parliament of any borrowing or any changes that may have been made in borrowings under that piece of legislation.

So these are some of the thoughts, as far as monetary management is concerned, Mr. President. The Central Bank has its job to do. We in the Parliament have our work to do, in terms of ensuring and doing our duty, part of which is scrutinizing before we pass legislation or subsidiary legislation in the interest of the citizens of this country.

With those few words, I thank you for giving me the time, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*]

9.30 p.m.

Mr. President: Sen. Al-Rawi. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Faris Al-Rawi: Thank you, Mr. President. I rise to join in the contribution ongoing now in the Senate at 9.29.49 p.m., on this Motion as joined by the other Motion, that is Motions (iii) and (iv) on our Order Paper, Mr. President.

I wish to thank my learned colleague, Sen. Ramkhelawan, for giving 99 per cent of what I was going to contribute to, on this Bill. If I were in court writing as a judge, I would say I too concur and sit down. But, I think that I am required to add to just a few measures of thought to this particular Motion; these Motions, Mr. President.

We are, of course, quite correctly dealing with Treasury Notes and Treasury Bills, and we are seeking collectively to raise those limits by $25 billion; collectively. Mr. President, the Treasury Notes Act is Chap. 71:39 of the Laws of Trinidad and Tobago, and the Treasury Bills Act is Chap. 71:40 of the Laws of Trinidad and Tobago. The Treasury Notes Act was passed in 1995, it is Act No. 14 of 1995, and that for Bills, was passed in 1960, Act No. 28 of 1960 and amended in 1995.

Mr. President, we do have several measures that—several pieces of legislation that interarticulate with these two particular Bills that we are debating by way of Motion, and those include quite properly, Mr. President, the Development Loans Act, the Foreign Investments Order, the General Loans and Stock Act. We do, of course, have to factor the Central Bank Act of itself and, of course, there are the provisions of authority which the Minister of Finance and the Economy enjoys in his capacity as the Treasurer under our Constitution.

The Laws of Trinidad and Tobago, the Supreme Law of Trinidad and Tobago is, of course, the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. We do know that in the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, we make laws specifically for the economic benefit of all of our citizens, Mr. President. And that is, in fact, through our assertions in the Preamble to our Constitution, and indeed in other aspects which reflect the financial management of our system.

Several sections of our Constitution are dedicated, in fact, to the manner in which appropriations are dealt with by Parliament and how we, in fact, as a Parliament can deal with the business of financing Trinidad and Tobago, how we safeguard it; how we manage it.

Now, Mr. President, if I could start off by saying that the golden question has been put on the Parliament floor, that is, why do we need $25 billion? We have heard the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy tell us that it is entirely for the purpose of liquidity mopping up; liquidity management. We do know that under the Laws of Trinidad and Tobago there are three specific pieces of legislation by which we can manage liquidity, and they are as mentioned by Sen. Ramkhelawan: the Treasury Bills Act, the Treasury Notes Act and the Treasury Bonds Act.

I wish to correct what I think is perhaps a misunderstanding on the hon. Sen. Ramkhelawan's part. I did not get Sen. Henry to have said that he proposes no limit to Treasury Bills or Treasury Notes per se without anything further. His position was that it may perhaps be apposite to our best interest in management, that we remove a limit under those pieces of legislation, and that we include the reporting requirements much as the Treasury Bonds Act does.

I think it is worthy to repeat that, Mr. President, because it is my own view that section 3 of the Treasury Notes Act and section 3 of the Treasury Bills Act already allow us that privilege, because section 3 of that piece of legislation which repeats both, is that:

> "For the purposes of promoting monetary credit and exchange conditions most favourable to the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, the Minister on the written advice of the Governor of the Central Bank may borrow money in Trinidad and Tobago—
>
> *(a)* in such sum…not exceeding in the aggregate one thousand million Trinidad and Tobago dollars; and
> *(b)* such further sum or sums as may be specified by resolution of Parliament,"

So it is, in fact, clause 3(1)(b) that allows us to go beyond the stated limits of section 3(1)(a) in each one. So I think that there may be made room inside of there. I do accept what I heard by way of crosstalk from the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, that in a democracy such as ours, it is prudent for us to come and bring the business of the people properly forward. But that would have to be done anyway under these pieces of legislation, because you need to have a resolution of the Parliament as we are doing right now. So I think that Sen. Henry's point was slightly different from the manner in which Sen. Ramkhelawan repeated it, Mr. President, and I just wanted to clarify that.

Mr. President, I think that what needs to be added to what Sen. Ramkhelawan offered to us is the danger of liquidity. The danger of liquidity alluded to by the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy is that when deposits lie in the banking system as they do, standing now to the tune of some $10 billion as they do—Central bank has assessed them at $7.8 billion, therefore, the banking sector has approximately $11 billion in liquidity.

When money lies in the banks as they do right now, what happens is that the demand for money by way of loans is eroded because you have deposits. And, therefore, interest rates on loans fall and when interest rates on loans fall, money

becomes cheaper for those who do not have deposits and so money can be borrowed. When money is borrowed that way, you may have the tendency to exacerbate inflation, because there is now more dollars in the economy competing for the same goods and services, and therefore, there can be a rise in prices.

It is almost always a constant when one is implementing the use of Treasury Bonds, Treasury Notes or Treasury Bills, that you do so to mop up liquidity in a specific context and the context is, of course, when you are looking to drive inflation down. In all of the Hansard reports that I have reflected upon, that I have researched for these particular Motions, there has not been an instance where inflation was not a ready and immediately apparent concern on the table.

In debates in particular in 2008, and then early in 2006 and in certain Motions on the state of the economy in the last or ninth session of the Parliament, the interest rate, the liquidity issues and inflation all stood hand in hand. What we have now, Mr. President, is a situation which is simply a statement on the part of the Minister of Finance and the Economy that we are not yet in the red zone; that inflation is not a problem in our society; that this may be a tool that we may wish to use; and that the Central Bank may be required to bring in open-market operations so that it can mop up liquidity. And what are open market operations?

Open market operations which Treasury Bills and Treasury Notes and Treasury Bonds to some extent stand as, are blunt instruments used to affect the interest and also inflation rates in our economy. We are about a balancing exercise tonight. We are saying that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago should, on the advice of the Central Bank's Governor be allowed to borrow moneys in short-term fashion, in the forms of Bills and Notes, borrow moneys and have those moneys placed into a locked account in the Central Bank, which forms part of the Consolidated Fund and the Exchequer Account, and that we are to pay interest on that. That is what we are doing. We are balancing the fact of on the one hand paying interest on certain bonds and also, Mr. President, on taking money out of the system. So there is a cost to doing this. There is an interest factor to floating bonds obviously.

In the case of Treasury Bills and Treasury Notes, you have particularly in the case of the shorter instrument, the interest is paid at the end of the Note. So if you have a Note of $10.00, then the cost of it is going to be $9.00, one would assume in respect of the Note and $1.00 in interest, and that $10.00 is paid back to you at the end. So the Note value is $10.00, you pay $9.00 for it, that is the amount that it is sold for and that $1.00 extra on the face of the Note making up $10.00 constitutes your interest and you get it at the end.

Slightly different from the longer term bonds, where you have in the period five and a half years to 10 years, the ability to borrow with regular payments on the face value of those bonds in periodical payments. But the point is that there is a cost to it, and we as a country say it is worth our while to pay that interest amount on the Bonds, Bills or Notes because what we are doing is we are avoiding and, therefore, balancing the bigger issue of runaway inflation where you can hurt your economy.

But what the Minister of Finance and the Economy has not done, is to answer that golden question, as to why do we need $25 billion? But not only has he failed to answer the question, but he has failed to put any form of information before as august a Chamber as the Senate of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. We have absolutely no form of advice from the Governor of the Central Bank, as the Act tells us that we should have. We have no form of statistical information as the Motion says we ought to reflect upon, because the Motion says, Mr. President, that the Governor of the Central Bank is to give written advice to the Minister of Finance and the Economy. Listen to the first part of it:

> "*Whereas* section 3(1) of the Treasury Notes Act, Chap. 71:39 provides that the Minister of Finance and the Economy on the written advice of the Governor of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago may, for the purposes of promoting monetary credit and exchange conditions most favourable…borrow money…"

So where is the *travaux préparatoires*, the background information, the material which we ought to consider? Where is that, Mr. President? How do we simply on the say-so of the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy accept information without any form of fact behind it? That is the first point, and that is a very important issue, Mr. President, because if we cannot have the written advice of the Governor of the Central Bank, or we cannot have any form of statistical information from him, then, Mr. President, we must turn to the literature which is in the public domain. And there are two facets of literature that are very important by way of guidance.

One is, of course, the Central Bank's own publications one of which is to be had in the Monetary Policy Report of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago. The latest one is, of course, a little dated, it is dated April 2013, Volume XIII Number 1, and then secondly, very interestingly, Mr. President, is the International Monetary Fund Trinidad and Tobago: Staff Report for the 2013 Article IV Consultation.

Now, Mr. President, both of these reports speak to liquidity as something that the Central Bank ought to have its eye on, but they cast the concern as to liquidity in a very careful context. They say that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, that the Governor of the Central Bank must keep a careful, watchful eye on liquidity whilst it is specifically dealing with its fiscal policy, not only its monetary policy.

Now, reserve requirements, Forex Exchange, foreign exchange purchase, Treasure Notes, Treasury Bills, Treasury Bonds, repo rates, all of those are monetary issues, monetary policy defined by the Governor of the Central Bank, the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago.

9.45 p.m.

But, Mr. President, those, as I put it, are blunt tools to affect a certain desired result. We have moved away from the reserved primary and secondary equation or preferred lending or targeted issues that were more common in the '70s, '80s and '90s. We have moved away from specific instruments of monetary policy. We have gone to more blunt instruments of monetary policy, but nowhere in the Minister of Finance and the Economy's reflection to this Chamber, to this Senate and, indeed, to the House of Representatives when he spoke late last month, just a week ago, has there been any reflection on the fiscal policy of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

What is the fiscal policy? What is the requirement for attention on the fiscal policy? I will tell you what it is, Mr. President. It is us knowing where we are going as a nation. What is going to take us there? Earlier I had cause to reflect upon the revenues of Trinidad and Tobago. This is how thick the book looks. [*Holds document up*]

The estimated revenue of Trinidad and Tobago can be had in 80 pages. The budget package really is a lot larger than that. The division into PSIP spending, into medium-term policy framework, et cetera, is certainly a lot larger than that, but the fact is, as I said earlier in relation to the CNG Motion, this Government is very long on expenditure and very short on revenue.

We are in a very unique situation where we are coming to talk about head room creation for limits on Treasury Notes and Treasury Bills when we do not know why. We do not know whether we have reached those limits because certain instruments have already matured; there are others that have been rolled over. Why is the limit now at maximum? Why have we hit the head room maximum capacity? We do not know. What is the status? Where is, as we have in the Treasury Bonds Bill, the report that ought to come to this Parliament to tell us what the factual situation is? It does not exist.

So when we go to the IMF report, when we go to the Central Bank Monetary Report, what we see is that there is excess liquidity, but the statements arising from those reports are that the excess liquidity has been caused by a poor administration of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's business. It has been caused by a poor roll-out of spending. Sen. Henry put it very capably in saying that there has been unproductive spending in our $275 billion worth of budgets.

So, Mr. President, when we look to the language of the IMF, by way of example, we hear, for instance, at paragraph 18 at page 10 of their report of October 2013, that:

> "The mission suggested that the fiscal stance for this year should continue to aim to support economic activity in view of the slack in the economy."

It says, Mr. President, that:

> "There is a substantial scope to improve the efficiency and incidence of revenue collection in the non-energy sector."—but that—"A range of options"—being—"available."—we should be looking—"at increasing total revenues through broadening tax bases and increasing targeted tax rates, while also increasing the efficiency and progressivity of the tax system."

It says, Mr. President, at paragraph 23, that:

> "The medium-term goal laid out in the budget statement of improving the fiscal balance by a minimum of one per cent of GDP a year, starting in FY 2013/14 is appropriate. However, the authorities have not yet announced a specific set of policies to achieve this goal..."

It says, at paragraph 25, tax reform, under the heading, "Staff developed an illustrative long-term active fiscal path…", that:

> "The tax reform could include a simplification of the VAT that rationalizes exemptions without a rate increase, a phased in property tax reform, and a revision of the personal and corporate income taxes to make them more progressive and modern, while also simplifying the schemes by eliminating multiple exemptions and deductions accumulated over time."

It says, under paragraph 27, which deals specifically with liquidity, that:

> "…low interest rates may be contributing to a portfolio outflows (combined with a lack of confidence in the local economy) and spurring purchases of interest-rate sensitive goods (automobiles and housing)."

So, Mr. President, what we have is a definite statement by an international review of our situation, which tells us that we have a liquidity issue, but that it is born out of concerns arising and stopping in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Sen. Ahmed: Since 2002.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: This IMF report, Sen. Ahmed, is based in 2013. It is not 2002. It is 2013 and it deals specifically with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, which, unless Sen. Ahmed knows, is in fact the UNC-led Government. I do not know what party she is from, but she ought to get on board with the fact that the UNC is the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. President, when we look to the Monetary Policy Report issued by the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, April 2013, Sen. Ahmed. I can lend you a copy so that you can see what the UNC's position from the Central Bank looks like. [*Interruption*] It may assist you in appreciating what you have gotten yourself into, hon. Senator. You will note that it is very obvious that the Central Bank also agrees that capital spending—this is at page—forgive me, the page numbers are not here, but it is six pages into the report. It says here:

> "Capital spending—the main thrust of the government's investment programme to spur economic growth—was almost 7 per cent lower than the corresponding period"—for—"FY 2012…"

You may be in 2002, but this is 2012 we are talking about, and 2013.

> "The shortfall in capital spending was mainly due to administrative delays, outstanding submission of invoices for payment and delays in the implementation of several projects."

In case Sen. Ahmed is not aware, these are projects by a UNC Government, not in 2002.

So, Mr. President, the excess liquidity that has been occasioned in this economy has been and is properly the fault of unproductive spending and delays in administrative positions by a UNC Government. That is to be contrasted by what can go the other way. You will remember, Mr. President, that the UNC came into Government on the back of serious concerns as to the overheating of the economy and the allegation that Trinidad and Tobago was suffering from the Dutch disease syndrome where we had the "curse of oil" as they put it and as others have put it—writers have put it—where we are blessed with economic wealth from natural reserves and we also have—[*Interruption*] [*Laughter*] Sorry, Sen. Griffith's crosstalk is—was not too clear a moment ago, Mr. President—where we also have, Mr. President—[*Laughter*]

Sen. George: What an impact you are having?

Sen. Beckles: Sen. Griffith, you have that effect.

Sen. George: What an impact you are having on Sen. Al-Rawi. [*Laughter*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I think I will have to take a Sen. Hinds break for a moment and address my liquidity situation. [*Takes a drink of water*]

Mr. President, the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago has quite properly reflected that it is the implementation of this Government—and that can be contrasted to the PNM's position where the Government accused it of overspending—too fast an implementation of projects in a heated global environment causing a heated local environment where inflation rates rose through the roof.

Sen. George: That caused it. It was not the PNM. Global environment caused it.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Caused by a PNM implementation in an overheated fashion. So the allegation against the PNM is that it spent too fast, too quickly and that it was poor; [*Interruption*] but what I am saying is that the import of inflation into that dynamic—you know, Sen. George would do well to remember that crosstalk is not contribution in a debate. It would help if he would stand and contribute in a debate as opposed to cross talking.

Anyway, the fact is that you have seen the flip side of it. You see poor implementation on the part of a UNC Government and now you see the flip side occurring in the years prior, in the Ninth Parliament, the PNM Government, where the allegation was that they were spending too much too fast and the allegation was that they were being profligate.

Mr. President, this debate, therefore, centres on confidence in the economy. Those are the words of the IMF. Those are the words of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago. We have no explanation as to why we need $25 billion in terms of aggregate limits for Treasury Notes and Treasury Bills. We have no facts and statistics. We have no explanation as to existing bond portfolio, be they bills or notes.

So, in a debate on confidence, it is therefore incumbent upon us to understand why businessmen, as the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy put it, would be very content to make money in a depressed environment and take all of that money—some $10 billion worth of deposits, of wealth—and keep it in a bank account earning 0.2 per cent.

That is what the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy has said and what we are doing, Mr. President, is saying to this country, let us take a block of money out of the system; let us sterilize it in the Consolidated Fund, in the Exchequer Account; let us sterilize it by putting it in the form of bonds, bills or notes; let us put it away for a certain amount of time and that is going to make businessmen spend more and invest their money because interest rates would now go up.

But why would you want to do that? How is that going to translate to confidence in the economy? So you have a situation with liquidity which is not causing a demand or push on inflation. It is not happening, so why would you possibly want to raise interest rates? That is what you are going to do. You are not raising interest rates on the savings or deposit side because they are incredibly low and will continue that way. You are going to raise the lending rate ultimately, Mr. President. But the logic for it is just not there because the fiscal policy conversation has not been had and we are in a situation where the Central Bank and where the IMF say to us, it is your poor implementation of policy; it is your lack of definition of policy that is causing the problem.

Look at the words of the IMF. Where in the last four budgets has this Government condescended to tell us how it is going to introduce property taxes? Whilst it has foregone $1.5 billion worth of revenue, where, in our budget statements which one can put too as fiscal policy statements, do we hear a Government tell us that it is going to cure and address the leakages in the bad structure of the Board of Inland Revenue and in the VAT collections department? Where?

10.00 p.m.

Where is the reformation of the public sector system as it relates to revenue collection coming because we do know that we have a heavy reliance on energy revenue? The non-energy revenue comes primarily by way of taxation on individuals, on companies, on certain goods and services, sure, but the fact is a more efficient tax collection system is required. We do know that this Government, specifically, axed the tax on property taxes, and that it also said that the Revenue Authority of Trinidad and Tobago was to be cancelled with impunity, one may argue.

So your revenue authority by which you would have ensured that you would have had a better collection from all of the people of Trinidad and Tobago was scrapped, and there is no replacement. Your property taxes, Mr. President, by which you would have dropped property taxes in certain areas to 3 per cent and

raise them in certain areas to just a little bit more—I did not mean to throw a missile, Mr. President—has not happened. So Mr. President, what are we doing about it? Where is the fiscal policy statement by this Government? Is it just the fact, well they can just do it?

Mr. President, let us for a moment reflect upon the debate, as Sen. Ramkhelawan raised it, on the Treasury Bonds legislation in 2008. It was debated in the House of Representatives on Monday, July 07, 2008, and it was debated in the Senate on July 15, 2008. And what I found very interesting, Mr. President, were the words of, again, one Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, sitting now as she does, but Member for Siparia and Leader of the Opposition I think she was in those days sitting then.

Mr. President, you know what shocked me? What shocked me was to read her contribution on the concept of Treasury Bonds, notes and bills because she dealt with all. In her humble estimation, Mr. President, bonds could not be supported—bills, et cetera, could not be supported because there was an interest factor to it. She argued that the Motions to deal with the Treasury Bonds, at that time, had to be amended to specifically include for the moneys allocated and put aside in sterilized accounts, not only to repay principal as we do in these Motions now, but also to include the payment of interest. Well, that is the Prime Minister now. What has the Minister of Finance and the Economy done about that? How come it does not feature in this Motion? Why is it that it has not been put aside? Surely, she must have been advised by someone, but—[*Interruption*]—not at all, we are talking about the concept of bills and notes. I invite you to read her contribution.

Similarly, one Wade Mark, sitting as Leader of Opposition Business in the Senate back then, had the same point to make, Mr. President, and they both demanded in their contributions to deal with Motions to deal with mopping up of liquidity only, they demanded that particulars be provided as it relates to the support for the Motion. They asked for the particulars from the Governor of the Central Bank; they asked for the particulars of facts relied upon for the substrata of the Motion, yet we have a Minister of Finance and the Economy, led by the same Kamla Persad-Bissessar, now sitting as Prime Minister, with none of those things in the basket.

So, again, like the CNG Motion, is this meant to be: do as I say but not as I do, Mr. President? It cannot be. Do I salt and pepper these papers or condensed milk them, as was offered before, to have them fed back to the mouths that uttered the words, Mr. President? It is rather unfortunate that people can be that reckless in their contributions to say things that just do not make sense, Mr. President. And

the words, I put it now, in 2008, offered by the Member for Siparia, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, and Mr. Wade Mark sitting in the Senate, they just do not make sense, on the same issue, Mr. President.

So, Mr. President, surely, the Government could listen to its Prime Minister. Surely, they could listen to someone as worthy as someone who sat in the Senate for many, many years. But, Mr. President, the fact is, it seems that this Government has amnesia, a wilfully adopted version of amnesia of the worst kind.

Mr. President, I want to come back to the issue of confidence. The monetary report by the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago looks to certain economic indicators, and it provides a summary of economic indicators at "table 1C", Mr. President, and, specifically, by way of example, it shows an economic indicator comparing quarter one of 2013 to quarter one of 2012. It compares production of mined aggregates in cubic yards, and it shows in quarter one of 2012, 289,657 cubic yards in 2012, quarter one; and then it shows 376,473, so this shows an increase, Mr. President. But I wanted to point out the fact that mined aggregate is an important reflector, and I am coming now to the issue of confidence.

So why is it that businessmen are happy to leave $10 billion rotting in a bank account at 0.2 per cent interest? Why? Where is the confidence loss? Could it perhaps be, Mr. President, that the confidence loss is because we have a Government that will not do anything about the scandal that occurred at the National Quarries institution, that company, Mr. President?

Sen. George: You could say anything.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: We are very well aware that it is in the public domain, spoken on political platforms, no less; arising in newspaper articles in printed version, no less; meeting, therefore, the standard of Sen. Devant Maharaj when he says, "Say it outside nah", as he is wont to taunt. Well, it was said outside that there was open theft, thievery, banditry, "wutlessness", slackness, every form of—[*Interruption*]

Sen. George: You could say anything.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I do not know if Sen. George really wants to defend what happened at National Quarries. [*Crosstalk*] I am sure that the Minister of Justice does not want to defend—[*Interruption*]

Sen. George: "People does say all kinda thing."

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—the purchase of one piece of equipment, by way of example, on confidence and mined aggregates.

Sen. George: "People does say all kinda thing."

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I am sure he does not want to defend the purchase of supposedly one piece of equipment—[*Interruption*]

Sen. George: Prove it.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Prove it?

Sen. George: "Yuh only talking."

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—at double the inflated value, Mr. President, where two pieces of equipment are imported instead by a company owned by the same Gopaul and Gopaul who created the fiasco in the NP contract. I am sure that Sen. George, as the Minister of Justice, wants to get to the bottom of a piece of equipment landing in Trinidad and Tobago and ending up in the yard of a company owned by the Gopaul's pushing—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Maharaj: Asha Javeed write that! [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Mr. President, does Sen. George—Sen. George, do you want me to give way for you to answer?

Sen. Maharaj: Asha Javeed write that!

Mr. President: Senators, shall we listen in silence to Sen. Al-Rawi.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I do not know why they are content to contribute in parliamentary debate by crosstalk only. The floor is there to debate. I will give way to you, come. Do you want me to give way?

Sen. George: I could do better than you all the time.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Come, go ahead. Right! So we have established that Sen. George will not speak in the Parliament on an issue, but is content to grumble. So, Mr. President, the fact is I am sure that the Minister of Justice does not want to defend theft, banditry and wickedness carried out on the people of Trinidad and Tobago at the National Quarries. [*Crosstalk*] So, Mr. President, that is, but one ground which affects confidence.

Another ground which affects confidence, as we all know, is the very positive signal sent by a Government of Trinidad and Tobago, a very capable Government of Trinidad and Tobago, when it admits in the Senate of Trinidad and Tobago to a loss of nearly $1 billion in Caribbean Airlines, Mr. President. It takes the chairman of the board of Caribbean Airlines, in a move of establishing pure confidence in Trinidad and Tobago—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Maharaj: Standing Order 35(1). Mr. President, 35(1). How you reach into Caribbean Airlines from National Quarries?

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Do you wish to rule on that, Mr. President?

Mr. President: You continue. Of course, I would like you to keep within the parameters of this Bill.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Thank you, sure. Yes. So I am dealing with confidence, Mr. President, as raised by the Central Bank in relation to liquidity. National Quarries fell under the Central Bank report, and I am dealing now with confidence in the administration and management of our economy. I am saying that this Government has demonstrated great competence in taking a chairman who ran $1 billion worth of losses in CAL, and promptly removing him, being fired by one Minister, and then immediately rehired to run a billion-dollar company called the HDC. [*Crosstalk*]

In fact, Mr. President, what I found spectacular is that in the course of interrogation in this Parliament, I had cause to ask the same chairman of the HDC now, how many persons sat on his board and he could not answer. For five minutes straight he could not answer, how many members constituted his board of directors. He did not know how many projects were there; how many persons comprised the tenders committee, nothing. I certainly was not inspired by that, and I am sure that the people watching that on television, as a public, could not be inspired by that measure of confidence gifted to us by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. President, perhaps, Sen. George wishes me to deal with the confidence that one engages by having a Ministry of Justice in existence since 2010, do absolutely nothing, Mr. President, to alleviate the pressures on the criminal justice system because crime as a measure of impact on the confidence in our economy is a very serious thing. But I will be more generous than that, not only because he is wearing a lovely Christmas tie, but because the fact is that he is new to that Ministry and it would be unfair of me to pound him for that particular purpose. [*Crosstalk*] He is inviting me to attack him, but I am not sufficiently provoked yet to do that, Mr. President. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. President, I see my good friend, the Minister of National Security, smiling today and, perhaps, I should say a few words on national security. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. George: Well he is the expert on everything; finance, law.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: You see, Mr. President, when we sit on a small bench like this in the Senate, one has to learn to cover many areas at the same time, so I do not think it is a matter of being an expert.

Hon. Senator: Jack of all trades.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: But it certainly is. Sen. Ganga Singh, when he sat in the Senate, did a remarkable job, Mr. President, so I am learning from some of the best in the industry [*Crosstalk*] but the fact is, Mr. President—[*Interruption*]

Sen. George: You are sounding too humble but that is not in character—[*Interruption*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Should I give way to Sen. George? [*Laughter*]

Sen. Maharaj: "Why yuh doh give way to me?"

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Sen. George, that is your second invitation to speak that you have not taken, "eh". Sen. Maharaj has asked me to, perhaps, give way to him, but I do not think he has much to contribute tonight. So I would hold it there. [*Crosstalk*]

So Mr. President, the Ministry of National Security, I think, has made a turn for the better. I certainly do think that crime as it affects our economy; crime as it affects the confidence level that people hold in our country, in our Government, is a very important factor. We all know the effect of crime. I think that Sen. Griffith has brought a measure of openness in his responses, save for today's responses on the fire truck issue, but I am sure supplemental questions would help him there, but the fact is, Mr. President, that it would be a laudable thing for the Government to remember the invitation that the Opposition has put forward to sit in a bipartisan way on crime discussions.

Mr. President, these Motions ask us, in short, to approve a $25 billion limit. It may perhaps be—if one reads section 3 of the Treasury Notes Act and the Treasury Bills Act each—that we do not necessarily need a limit. I think it prudent that we do, but it does cause some complication. I think that the Minister of Finance and the Economy can do a lot better than he has in providing us with information which we ought to have.

10.15 p.m.

Mr. President: Hon. Senator, sorry to cut you short, but the speaking time of Sen. Al-Rawi has expired.

Motion made: That the hon. Senator's speaking time be extended by 15 minutes. [*Sen. P. Beckles*]

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. President: Sen. Al-Rawi. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. George: Aye! Aye! Aye!

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I am lucky and blessed that I have my Leader of the Senate—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: For now.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi:—Mrs. Beckles-Robinson to move that Motion for me, and I thank her and hon.Members. [*Interruption*]

Sen. George: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I know you would have. [*Laughter*] I know you would have. Sen. George is my friend despite the barbs, you know.

Sen. George: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. Beckles: I have an hour and 45 minutes. [*Desk thumping & laughter*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Mr. President, I was saying that I think the Government can do a lot better in terms of coming with the *travaux préparatoire*, the material by which we should prepare ourselves, so that we as a Senate can have some better reflection upon the business of Trinidad and Tobago.

And if you would permit me a small deviation, Mr. President, I wish to say that it has been a distinguished pleasure and honour to have served in this Senate with the leader of my Bench, Mrs. Beckles-Robinson, and with [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds, Sen. Hinds. [*Interruption*]

Sen. George: That is the best sentence you speak since you—[*Inaudible*] [*Laughter*]

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: I have learnt so much from them, Mr. President, as my political seniors, and I wish to say that Mrs. Beckles-Robinson has demonstrated, and Sen. Hinds has demonstrated, both, a remarkable ability to allow their colleagues the room to grow, as we have, Mr. President. There are very few people in politics, as long as they both have served, that have the strength of character to allow their Bench equal participation and room to grow.

But I want to say, Mr. President, in just a few words more, that the PNM has demonstrated tonight that it does not dismiss its people in the dead of night, never to return to a bench, that we have our Members contribute because there is so much more to come from our two Senators who are just departing. I can guarantee you that the march that the PNM makes is towards the 2015 General Election—[*Interruption*]

Mr. President: You are taking quite a liberty. [*Laughter*]

Sen. George: Yes.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Sorry. I am about to wrap up. Mr. President, I could tie it into the Motion, but I would not bother to tease you about that. So the point is, Mr. President, that we intend to move as a party in that direction, be it through strong advocacy on Bills like this, Mr. President, or otherwise, but I wanted to express my sincere gratitude to them both for their tutelage and experience. And thank you for cutting me the slack to not have to tie that into the Motion, which I could have. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. George: Yes.

Sen. F. Al-Rawi: Mr. President, with those not so few words, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. George: Amen! [*Laughter*]

Mr. President: Sen. Dr. Mahabir.

Sen. Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir: Thank you very much, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this Motion tonight. And thank you very much, Sen. George, for that welcome at this hour.

Sen. George: You are welcome.

Sen. Dr. D. Mahabir: Mr. President, much has been said on the subject, and I think the previous Senators, all, have in fact covered really the gist of the matter. For me, coming at this stage, I simply would like to clarify and get clear what really is the problem that is being addressed. And after that particular issue, Mr. President, is identified and sorted out, it is important to determine whether the current measure, the Motion to increase the sales of Treasury Bills, afterwards referred to as T-bills, will in fact solve the problem that we are seeking to address.

The problem apparently stems from the fact that there is this issue with excess liquidity in the financial economy, and we need to ask ourselves, Mr. President, what really is the problem which arises on account of excess liquidity. Is excess liquidity itself a problem? The answer of course is, no. We have had an excess liquidity problem since the early 2000s, and that is defined as commercial banks having funds to lend but being unable to find qualified borrowers, consequently holding a stock of idle reserves that they would like to dispense with but they cannot.

This causes a problem for the commercial banks but let us see exactly what will a Treasury Bill sale do for this particular problem. A Treasury Bill sale can achieve two purposes. I am simply trying, Mr. President, to get to the core of the problem, because what is requested of the Parliament is a significant increase in a particular limit, and we need to find the cogent reasons which would justify this increase in a limit at this particular point in time, at this stage in the economic cycle that Trinidad and Tobago has found itself in. So, the first issue is, what will a Treasury Bill sale—and I will include Treasury Bill and Treasury Note: one is of short duration, one is of longer term duration—what will a Treasury Note sale, a Treasury Bill sale do? Simply, it will in fact transfer a piece of paper—well, hypothetically a piece of paper—to the financial institutions and the institutions will then part with their cash, their idle cash, that they were finding it a little difficult to lend to the private sector.

So this can service two constituencies. One, the Minister of Finance and the Economy can use the sale of T-bills—they are after all his bills; they are Treasury Bills; they are his obligations, ultimately—he can use these bills to ensure that bridging financing for the central government can be obtained at rather low cost. It is always cheaper for the Minister of Finance and the Economy when he requires short-term financing to have these bills sold so that he would be able to pay his bills on a regular basis. And given the structure of the economy, we know that the Government, the Minister, receives a bulk of his revenue at quarterly intervals from the energy companies, but his expenditure is on a daily, weekly and monthly basis, and it is quite normal for there to be some kind of a cash flow problem before he obtains his injections in March and June, and September and December.

So a Treasury Bill sale can in fact provide cheap financing for him, which will then, of course, be repaid after a 90-day period when he has obtained some amount of injection from his major sources of revenue. But this is not the purpose of the current Motion. The current Motion is to ensure that we can stabilize the economy, and we are asking for a very large increase in the amount of bills that the Minister can sell through the Central Bank to achieve economic stability.

What are we trying to stabilize? What is the economic problem? Former Senators have all alluded to the fact that we, in times of inflation, would need to withdraw purchasing power from the private sector, sterilize it; that is, lock it away so that there is less funds in circulation and demand inflation will be tempered. But do we have an inflation problem now? The answer is, no. As the Minister indicated, quite clearly, our inflation rate is still in single digits, and this includes headline inflation which of course includes the food element.

So we do not currently have an inflation problem even though we have an excess liquidity problem. We have had an excess liquidity problem in the past together with inflation, but currently we do not have inflation and therefore inflation control does not seem to be the element that the Government wishes to stabilize. It has to be that if the Government wishes to stabilize inflation, there is some forecast on the part of the Central Bank which suggests that over the medium term, inflation will become a major problem and they need to be ready to absorb the liquidity the moment core inflation perhaps exceeds 8 per cent.

But if that is the case, Mr. President, it would have been beneficial, as Sen. Al-Rawi said, for us to see the forecasts, the report. I personally would have liked to see the method used by the Central Bank, the forecasting technique, their theory and, of course, their use of data over the last decade to indicate that in a years' time there is a high probability of inflation which will then warrant them moving in in a manner to absorb the liquidity via open market operations; that is via selling these Treasury securities. But failing that, we simply have, as the Motion is worded, the word of the Minister, that there was written advice from the Governor of the Central Bank—the written advice which was not made available to us, and the research of the Research Department of the Central Bank also is not available to us, and so we are being asked really to approve a measure, Mr. President, and we are not sure really the basis of the request and what is the economic problem.

I am not saying an economic problem does not exist. I am just saying, given the information and the incomplete data set that we have, it does not seem that inflation is a critical issue that is going to be at the heart of this particular request. Second, in any event, before I move on to the second area that we may wish to stabilize, if we do wish to reduce the inflation rate, open market operations, as the Minister indicated quite clearly and quite rightly, is not the only tool available to the Central Bank.

The Central Bank can, in fact, absorb liquidity via foreign exchange sales. If it sells foreign exchange to the commercial banks, the commercial banks will have to pay for that foreign exchange with the liquidity that they have, which can then be absorbed. So that is another tool that is available to the Central Bank independent of any increase in the limit, and it is available to them; there is no limit to the amount that they will sell, the only objective would be whether in fact as they sell the foreign exchange the level of the exchange rate, since we are in a quasi-floating arrangement, will be at a level that they would want. In any event, we would see what is known as an exchange rate appreciation; the rate moving from 6.44 maybe to 6.20, but it is available to them to use, to absorb the excess liquidity.

The Central Bank also has, available to it, the tool called, the reserve requirement ratio. It is not used abundantly now for whatever reason, but it is a tool nonetheless available where they can simply raise it from its current level to over 20 per cent. So it is not as if the Central Bank is devoid of tools at this time even though it has really come to the limit with respect to Treasury Bills sales in the open market.

The other area that the Central Bank may wish to alert the Minister to, and therefore to seek approval from the Parliament for an increase in the amount of these bills that they can sell, is with respect to the exchange rate. If the exchange rate is under threat, and if there is extra excess demand for foreign currency, then it may mean that the bank may wish to absorb the liquidity so that aggregate demand, demand overall in the economy, can somehow be curtailed. But we know that the reserves of the Central Bank happen to exceed some 10 months of import cover.

So we do not have an exchange rate problem since our foreign reserves are at a very high and attractive level. We do not have an inflation problem currently, but I think the Minister will agree that if we do have anticipations of an exchange rate problem and a foreign reserve problem, or anticipations of inflation, then it is fair that we in this honourable Senate should be given some kind of data, some kind of document, to justify that there is impending need over the next 12 months, and therefore we should take some action early so that the Central Bank is not unnecessarily stymied in discharging its functions in economic stabilization.

10.30 p.m.

What we do know will be the result of the measure that is being undertaken is that as we sell these notes and bills to the financial sector, there will be two effects. One, there will be less liquidity available to the private sector because what we sell—the $25 billion if we go up to the limit—will be absorbed from the financial economy over time, and the rest that is there will then be available to the private sector. Competition for these limited funds will put upward pressure on the interest rate.

Also, as the Minister's Bills are being auctioned, there will be an increase in the implicit interest rates as he is trying to find more and more buyers. So both effects will result in upward pressure on the interest rate. Unequivocally, without debate, there will be an increase.

It would have been scientific for us to know if we were to remove the entire $25 billion that is being increased over the course of a two-year or three-year period—it cannot be over a three-month period, that would of course be too

short—but if we are saying over a three-year period we may need to withdraw that much, it would have been prudent, I think, for the Central Bank to offer a thorough statistical analysis on what would be the likely effect on the interest rates across the board in the economy, for all classes of borrowers and also for people who have money to deposit. I would have liked to see what the interest rate profile was going to be. Interest rates were going to rise; I just do not know by how much.

This increase in the interest rate that is sure to arise will have some effect on one variable I am sure we all have some concern with, which is the rate of economic growth. This increase in the interest rate is sure to do a few things. Mr. President, it will affect adversely—but how adversely, again we do not have the research, and the Central Bank has an excellent research team which ought to have been able to give this honourable Senate some information with respect to the impact of this measure on interest rates on the following: mortgage lending. I know the Government has its 2 per cent window, but that does not cover the entire mortgage market. It would have been beneficial for us to see whether in fact mortgage rates were going to rise as a consequence, and if so by how much, simply using available information to project. By how much would the interest rate on consumer loans rise—that is loans on consumer durables increase? This too would have been beneficial. By how much would overdraft rates rise on account of this measure? This would have been beneficial as well because they will influence the rate at which we are recovering.

We are, I think all would agree—the Minister would certainly agree—welcoming the positive signs we are seeing in certain sectors of the economy. We are seeing some positive signs in certain areas. We are still seeing depression in a number of areas, and our recovery is still struggling and nascent. It is not a full-fledged, buoyant, runaway recovery; we are still struggling with 1 and 2 per cent growths. We are still seeing quarters where we have negligible growths and quarters where we have more attractive rates, but we are now emerging. I think it would be very valuable for us to examine how the interest rate effect of this particular measure, the interest increase, would affect the business sector and how it would affect the consumer sector, with respect to spending in the overall economy.

The Minister did indicate that a number of businesses are simply parking funds, and they are parking funds at a 1 per cent or less than 1 per cent interest rate in the money market funds. They are parking their profits. This seems to be really the heart of the problem. Since the interest rates are certain to increase with

this measure which we are asked to approve, will there not now be a greater incentive for the business community to place more of their funds in these higher interest bearing deposits, as opposed to taking risks, because now the reward is simply greater?

We are in a situation where the interest rates are low and business confidence is low. If the interest rates increase and the cost of borrowing increases, will business confidence also increase or will it also remain low? This is an unanswered question. It appears that as long as business confidence remains depressed, there will be a benefit to the business community for having an increase in the interest rate to place their funds while they are looking for investment opportunities, and there will be a charge on the Consolidated Fund to service this particular obligation. So the business community will benefit while doing little by way of engaging in productive activity. At the same time, this measure will incur a cost.

The Minister was not particularly clear on how this cost was going to be financed, but after all they are his Bills. They carry his obligation. He is in charge of the Treasury; the Central Bank is simply administering for him. If we sell $25 billion more in these Bills and the interest rate on average on the Bills amounts to 1 per cent, it means that out of the revenue of the Minister he will have to pay $250 million per annum to service this particular intervention. Mr. President, $250 million can be used for a number of purposes in these depressed times.

We are paying a certain amount to the holders of these Bills. They are coming out of the resources of the Government and we are not sure what it is we are going to get. We will be paying a quarter billion dollars for the option to control inflation. We will be paying a quarter billion by my estimate, and again, it would have been valuable for the research staff of the bank to tell us exactly what was going to be the cost implication of this particular measure.

I know there will be unequivocally again a beneficiary of this increase in the sale of Government paper, and this is the commercial banks themselves. The banks themselves who are earning really zero on idle reserves, by purchasing these key Bills will be able to earn whatever interest rate they can get, as opposed to zero. So the banks will be benefiting. The banks' balance sheets are going to be enhanced. If the banks are to benefit in this way, ostensibly because the Central Bank needs to absorb this liquidity, which is not yet a problem, what are the commercial banks doing for we the people?

Commercial banks earn a tremendous amount already from the charges they levy on the ordinary people, and we need to address this. Mr. President, $20 if your chequing account falls below $15,000. Now, you may say $20 is a small

sum, but not multiplied by the consumer base of the bank. Insufficient funds in an account; $30 for a bounced cheque; US $5 if your account was to go dormant. The commercial bank will charge you simply for not putting any stress on their infrastructure—$4 for the use of the ATM machine, and on and on and on.

It would have been very valuable for me in this Chamber to actually obtain from the Central Bank the amount of commercial bank revenue that they have derived over the last year simply by levying service charges on customers. Now we are asking the population, we are asking we the people to finance the Treasury Bill interest component, because as they buy the Treasury Bills we ultimately will have to pay the interest to them. And I am saying, it is okay to do that if the society is getting something tangible, but I am not seeing what it is.

I am not for one moment saying that there is no clear benefit. It is just that it is opaque; it is not defined. It is unclear and it is something that could possibly be injurious to the economy, if it is going to cause the growth process to be stultified.

Mr. President, in that context I look at what the advanced economies are doing. They too have a similar problem of the growth of the economy moving along at a very stultifying rate. It is stopping and going, and one positive quarter followed by two terrible quarters. What they have done is just the opposite of what is being proposed here. The amount of these notes which were available for transactions in the US economy was exhausted. The Federal Reserve of the United States, following what the Bank of Japan did, did exactly the reverse of what we are proposing here. They are not saying we are going to sell T-bills, they said we are going to buy T-bills. Well, all the T-bills that the commercial banks had were sold to the Federal Reserve, and then the Federal Reserve said we will go a stage further. We are going to buy securities from you commercial banks which are not T-bills. This was highly unorthodox.

They followed the Bank of Japan and they went into what was known as QE1, QE2 and QE3. What is QE1, 2 and 3? Quantitative easing; they went to the open market. The Federal Reserve went to the open market to purchase mortgage backed securities from the commercial banks. They went to the open market to purchase other types of financial instruments that they may have had—very unorthodox—with the intention of making sure that their financial institutions remain liquid and with the intention of keeping the interest rate very low, almost down to zero. For them, they saw the interest rate as a major impediment to the business cycle, and they wanted to keep it low, and hence they engaged in this highly unorthodox measure, which is a complete reversal. They were actually buying securities, not selling securities. Quantitative easing in the United States and in Japan, very unorthodox, a reverse policy.

10.45 p.m.

Mr. President, it has to be that the Central Bank has undertaken its research and it has to be that the Central Bank is of the view that an increase in the interest rate will, in fact, generate positive benefits for the investment climate. It has to be that they see that the current low interest rate environment is in fact something that is a drag on the economy, that we need to show some increase in the interest rate to stimulate business confidence. But, Mr. President, the information and the data, and the analysis, and the economic logic and theory which follow this line of argument, which, to my mind is highly justifiable, is simply not there.

So, Mr. President, I think that the request to raise the limit at this time really has not been fully justified. I am not for one moment, and I want to impress on the Minister of Finance and the Economy, I am not for one moment saying there is no justification. What I am saying is that it has not been articulated, because given the information that we currently have, that is in the public domain, there is little by way of a justification, for an interest rate increase at this time, because we are not seeing the inflation problem and we are not seeing the threat to the foreign reserves.

Of course, I am sure the research exists and it would be good to see it. But, failing that, Mr. President, I think that the Minister of Finance and the Economy should really refer this matter back to the Central Bank to indicate clearly: What is their view on the role of the interest rate with respect to investment spending in Trinidad and Tobago? What is their analysis on the effect of this measure on the interest rate and how sure are they that the resulting increase in the interest rate will not undermine the current positive growth that we are seeing at this time? This is my concern, Mr. President, and, so, without that data I would indicate that I would not be able to support the Motion until the correct information is forwarded.

I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: The Minister of Food Production.

The Minister of Food Production (Sen. The Hon. Devant Maharaj): Mr. President, thank you very much for this opportunity to join in this debate. It was not my intention so to do tonight on this Motion to debate the Treasury Notes, Chap. 71:39, but the Minister of Finance and the Economy in his piloting of the Motion spoke to the historical achievements being made in the agricultural sector, which provoked Sen. Ramkhelawan's concern in several areas.

In his presentation of the Motion, Sen. Howai indicated that for the first time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago we have had four consecutive quarters of growth in the agricultural sector. That is according to all the data that we as an independent nation have. This Government can boast of that unique place in our history. [*Desk thumping*]

That achievement, if I were to take my friend Sen. Ramkhelawan to heart, appeared to have been the result of external forces chiefly and nothing to have done with the activities of the Ministry of Food Production and the activities of the Government as a whole in regard to that achievement. Sen. Howai, in his presentation, linked those achievements to the impact it has had on headline inflation with food inflation being one of its lowest points in the history of Trinidad, about 3 per cent as we stand today.

When we came into office, Mr. President, growth in the sector was negative 32 per cent. [*Desk thumping*] As I said now, we are now in the invidious position of boasting that we have four quarters of positive growth. When we came into office, food inflation stood at minus 29 per cent. That is what we inherited in May 2010. Today, it stands at 3 per cent, again, another achievement in terms of the Government's handling of the very critical and vexing problem of food inflation. But, I would come to some of the measures that the Government has employed over the last couple years in order to bring down those rates and address some of the questions raised by Sen. Ramkhelawan of meats coming in which we cannot lay claim to. I would want to disabuse his mind of that.

But he spoke to the issue of the lands, and I know anytime he probably drives in a southerly direction and he sees those rolling hills going down Couva and Claxton Bay, it bothers him deeply that they are not reflective of plantations of some form of crop or the other, and it vexes his soul so much so that every time he comes to the Senate and every opportunity, that he makes no hesitation to mention it here. And on a couple of occasions I took the time to address it, and the last occasion during the budget contribution I made in early October, just a couple months ago, I even actually gave him a copy of the breakdown of the lands and how it was allocated and spent, but I do not know if my goodly colleague across there, Sen. Ramkhelawan, actually took the time—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramkhelawan: Senator—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: You had your chance. So I feel I am compelled to once again revisit the allocation of those lands post 2003, and this is what we inherited.

Permit me to once again repeat and I am quoting here from my budget contribution of earlier this year:

> "Commercial and residential tenants; squatters and long leases, 2,258 acres; infrastructure, roads, playgrounds, cemeteries and so on, 1,965"—acres—"built up development company dwelling/offices, 166"—acres—"commercial/residential built-up development, 2,640"—acres—"other lands for non-commercial and non-agricultural activities to Ministries and state enterprises, 2,400"—acres—"proposed usage for industrial and commercial activities which include e TecK, EMBD and so on 5,200"—acres—"proposed for housing, HDC/LSA, 1,900"—acres—"housing for former Caroni employees via VSEP, 1,300"—acres—"proposed housing for the national community, 2,500"—acres—"contingency for board-approved leases, 1,200"—acres—"Ministry of Sport, 65"—acres—"for existing proposed agriculture, agricultural squatters, 4,200"—acres—"citrus, 2,900"—acres—"rice, 4,000"—acres—"livestock and pasture, 3,700"—acres—"free crops, 340"—acres—"aquaculture, 25"—acres—"lands for agriculture for employees via VSEP, 20,319"—acres—"existing agricultural tenants, 11,861"—acres—"four 100 parcels for agriculture for model farms, 400"—acres—"PCS Nitrogen, 25"—acres.

Mr. President, it is a misunderstanding, it is a fallacy, it is erroneous, it is offensive to believe or to have the national community walk away with the conception that these lands you see idle are in the possession of the State and somehow it is remaining idle, under-utilized by some wicked, spiteful, malicious approach to agriculture. If that was the case we would not be in a position to boast about reduction of food inflation and growth in the sector. The lands have been leased, their legal entitlement belongs to others. If the Government of the day and any Government that assumes office were to try to appropriate those lands it would encourage litigation almost instantly. You would find lawyers coming out of the woodwork taking up this cause as the Government would be then trying to break their lease, so to speak. And if the Government of the day were to try to purchase or buy back these leases the cost would be very prohibitive. It would run into, no doubt, billions of dollars as the lands have a certain value, especially those that have developed over the past few years.

This administration, unlike our predecessor, has undergone an aggressive approach to distributing the land that was promised to the Caroni 1975 workers. You would recall the Deyalsingh judgment, the very famous Deyalsingh judgment of 2007 where these workers actually had to go to court in order to

force the then Government of the day to provide infrastructure to execute the leases, and during that period of 2003—2009 the Government of the day could only boast of approximately 500 leases being given out to the former Caroni 1975 workers. So, if you do not have the lease you could not have engaged in any agricultural activities. We have now entered, as I said before, on a very aggressive, robust approach to delivering leases. In fact, tomorrow the hon. Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar and the Minister of Land and Marine Affairs, Minister Jairam Seemungal will be giving out some additional leases of approximately 500 agricultural leases to those Caroni workers who have been waiting and waiting for the last 10 years to obtain their leases for both agriculture and—[*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, that is not the first time. Tomorrow's event will not be the first time. We have conducted similar activities over the course of this year alone that I could remember where we have given out in total over 5,000 leases to Caroni workers. So, they have been now in possession of their lease where they can now go to the ADB or any other financial institution and effect some sort of financial arrangement to get their land into production. [*Desk thumping*] So, the lands would be coming into production. [*Desk thumping*] We were saddled by the incompetence of the PNM past, and that is why the Caroni workers were not able to go on to these lands that they were really entitled to, they were promised, but were never given.

So, those lands that so bother you and vex you, Sen. Ramkhelawan, I am hopeful as you drive along you would see more and more of them coming into cultivation. But do not by any stretch of the imagination believe that the Government has the ability to simply grab land, and if that is the intention of the hon. Senator, I would urge and encourage him, bring a Motion, a Private Member's Motion to encourage the Government to seize the lands of individuals that they are legally leased and we would debate that Motion then.

I think we are very hesitant on this side to embark upon that particular course of action. And because this is an island, we have stopped making land in Trinidad a long time, you know. [*Laughter*] We have stopped making land here, and because of that we decided to take up the Jagdeo initiative which was floated so many years ago to utilize the land resource of that South American neighbour of ours that was offered to the Caricom in order to promote greater food security for the Caricom as a whole. No other country in Caricom decided to take it up. This administration has taken up that offer. The technocrats between the Ministry of Food Production and our counterparts in the Ministry of Agriculture in Guyana

have been working out the details. My recent visit there really culminates over a year long of discussion and dialogue with them where an initial 10,000 acres would be utilized for food production to bring down further our food inflation, reduce our food import bill and address that $4 billion problem that we are faced with, with the import of foreign food items.

We have decided on the commodities to be grown, one of which would be animal feed stock which would include corn, sorghum, soya and which would have a direct impact on the price of poultry, the price of other meat and dairy products, other tree crops, root crops and so on, so this is some of the long-term vision in terms of bringing down the price of food in Trinidad and Tobago as well as further addressing food inflation.

But Sen. Ramkhelawan spoke about the contribution to GDP of agriculture during his contribution, and he used generalities and would give the impression that the contribution of agriculture was almost negligible, insignificant. But I would like to be a little more specific in my response by way of direct comparison. The contribution of agriculture to GDP in constant prices in 2009 was $345.9 million; this increased to 77 per cent to $610.8 million in 2013. That is achievement. That is increase. [*Desk thumping*]

11.00 p.m.

Mr. President, my friend also spoke about specific commodities in large terms, and again, I would like to go down to the details because the devil is really in the details. In the area of cassava, we increased output by over—from last year 2012—2013, by 15.2 per cent; yam by 57.2 per cent; sweet potato by 58.7 per cent. In the area of fruits and vegetables: oranges, we increased over last year by 127 per cent; grapefruit, by 41 per cent.

Now these, to many, may seem insignificant. We are talking about a Ministry that has been described as a pumpkin and bhaji Ministry, but the School Feeding Programme, if you speak to the administrators there, they will tell you that it is cheaper to buy an apple than a locally grown orange because of the economies of scale and the difficulty. So by increasing these areas of production in citrus, in root crops and so on, we would affect what our import bill is as well as the local palate.

In terms of pineapple, production increased by 25 per cent; pawpaw by 6 per cent; other vegetables such as melongene, we got a 27 per cent; ochro, 24 per cent; pumpkin, 15.8 per cent; cucumber, 13.9 per cent, and the area that was singled out by Sen. Ramkhelawan, meat and milk and so on, we actually had a significant impact there.

In the area of poultry, we had a 92.4 per cent increase in local production, and if you talk to the administrators of any one of our quick service restaurants (QSR), such as KFC, they would tell you that in Trinidad, we really eat a considerably large amount of poultry. In fact, the Independence Square KFC, at one time boasted of the highest number of transactions in the world. It was only when KFC opened an outlet in Beijing, China, that it surpassed Port of Spain. So we are a poultry-consuming—now, if we did not increase this poultry production, it would mean that we would be importing this poultry into Trinidad and Tobago.

Milk production, for the first time in a very long time, increased to 7.1 per cent. Again, milk is a very important commodity. It affects the vulnerable in our society, the very young and the very old, as well as those in-between depend on it from time to time.

Honey—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: That is an important commodity.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj:—we saw a 36.4 per cent increase in honey. Again, our honey is one of the best in the world. And some of those food items, we may take it for granted; we laugh at it, as Sen. Henry is chuckling in the corner there, but it is only when you have a shortage of food on the shelves of the grocery, when you go to your particular grocery store and you recognize that some basic items you depend and rely on for your normal diet—that you like to eat—is no longer on the shelves, then you would recognize how important food is, and the Government's role in controlling food prices and food inflation.

Mr. President, we did achieve a reduction in our food import bill, of approximately 2 per cent between 2010—2013, and by way of example again—I do not like to deal in generalities as my friend across there, but to quote some specific examples to show you that we are moving in a direction.

We have a manifesto which we held out to the people of Trinidad and Tobago in 2010: "Prosperity for All", the People's Partnership Manifesto, which was subsequently laid into this Parliament and became Government policy. [*Desk thumping*] This provided the blueprint which the Government went forward with, and have been following for the last three years. So this is the guide for the Ministry of Food Production. That is why we are achieving the kind of successes we have been.

In the area of meat and edible oil—offal—we saw prices dropping from US $83,000 to $80,000; fishes, crustacean, mollusks, $29,000 to $26,000; tubers from $41,000 to $32,000; cereals, $87,000 to $80,000; animal vegetable fats and oil,

from $61,000 to $56,000. So the area of animal production that you thought that we depended on heavily, you are seeing we are making a direct impact in terms of where we are going with that.

Mr. President, these achievements, as my friend across there had cause to doubt, did not come by guess; did not come out of the sky; was not totally dependent on fluctuations on the international commodity market; in fact, quite the opposite. The international commodity market was not kind this year. In fact, there was a shortage of corn on the international market and in some areas there was actual hoarding of corn. As a result, it affected the price of poultry; it affected the price of many other products consequently, and that had a direct impact on inflation as a whole. But it was due to some of the measures that we adopted [*Desk thumping*] that minimized this.

My friend, of course, while he contributed to the debate in the budget earlier this year, I do not know if he paid particular attention to the Ministry of Food Production's contribution. Like most people, there is no bacchanal in agriculture; there is only achievement so far. [*Desk thumping*] Were he attentive to the contribution, he would have recognized that we were able to achieve what we did because we completed 23 kilometres of new roads; rehabilitated 70 kilometres of roads over the fiscal year, representing over 636 per cent increase from the 2008—2009 period.

So, Mr. President, understand the kind of increases that you are seeing in the agricultural sector. In 2008—2009, only 11 kilometres were repaired and renovated under the PNM administration that does not appreciate—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Transportation—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: So when you plant your crop, how are you going to get it to market if there is no road available for you? So I am hopeful that with the introduction of Avinash Singh, the new Senator, that they would hopefully have a new inclination towards agriculture.

Hon. Senator: Sweet potato.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: The sweet potato—he campaigns with sweet potato—free.

Hon. Senator: From midnight he will come. [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: In 2012/2013, we maintained 149 kilometres of agricultural access roads. [*Crosstalk*] This again, Mr. President, represents a significant increase over the comparative year 2008/2009. It represents a 310 per cent increase over the PNM's performance. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Lambert: Oh Lord, yes.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: I could tell you about the food basket areas where roadwork was done, such as Mayaro, Marper in Plum Mitan, Connector Road, Tableland, Penal and so on, and all these activities in developing the roadworks facilitated the farming communities that connect it. I could tell about the de-silting of over 233 water channels in Caroni, Waterloo, Jerningham—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: Is Avinash a squatter?

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj:—and Felicity, and Avinash Singh is a beneficiary of that because he grows the sweet potato and so on, in the Felicity area in which he has no legal entitlement so to do. But I do not know if the policy of the PNM is now to introduce squatters into the Senate, [*Laughter*] or people who are—who knows, they might have squatters here already.

Sen. Cudjoe: "Right now all yuh squatting."

Sen. the Hon. D. Maharaj: Well from midnight we will have squatters here. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Squatting in Government.

Sen. Cudjoe: "All yuh squatting in Government."

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: We saw the installation of over 22 irrigation sites throughout the country in Macaulay, in Vega de Oropouche, in Tableland, Golden Grove and so on. What you saw, Mr. President, is some of these much needed infrastructural work having the impact that the Minister of Finance and the Economy could now boast to the country that it has had a consequential impact on food inflation and the growth in the sector. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President, under the PNM, rice was dead in Trinidad. We had to import all of our rice, and it is hard-pressed to find anybody in Trinidad and Tobago who eats no rice at all, at least once a day or once every day, or once a week.

Sen. Lambert: No, "we doh want rice".

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Rice is considered a staple, along with bread and flour and so on. We import $96 million to $100 million in rice annually and less than 5 per cent of that is produced locally. We have aggressively pursued a rice revitalization programme to address this issue and we have seen an impact in that. Rice production paddy by the end of this year represents close to 20,000 kilograms and, Mr. President, this will represent approximately 50 per cent of our rice consumption under this administration. [*Desk thumping*]

So, Mr. President, some of these achievements, as Sen. Ramkhelawan—[*Crosstalk*]—would have to take into consideration, has to have had some kind of impact on—and I am glad that he gave me this opportunity to once again put it in *Hansard* because it is not a stranger to *Hansard* because if—I invite him to revisit my budget contribution because it is all there. All I did is print up the old budget contribution.

Sen. Ramkhelawan: You say over the same thing?

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Yes, basically "is the same thing ah saying over. Yuh wasn' paying attention then. Dah is de hard part." So I invite you to pay keen attention to agriculture again.

My friend made specific reference to meat in his contribution because we are a "meat-mouth" society by and large. What did we do in order to facilitate and encourage meat production which will affect food inflation and growth in the sector? Gone are the days, Mr. President, where you would "see ah man pulling some goat with ah grass knife in hand", cutting grass on the side of the road. That, you do not see. Farmers have to be structured; we have to have a more serious approach to this, and we have done so. We have established what is called a forage bank, or a grass bank, in Mon Jaloux and in Chaguaramas where, so far, we have crossed the figure of over 60 tons of grass being packaged and baled and sold to farmers.

We have another forage bank being established in Chatham down in Cedros. And, Mr. President, Cedros is an area, when I visited there on the first occasion, I saw an abandoned breeding unit. Under the PNM, they closed down everything under Caroni that was productive.

Hon. Senator: Based on the Cotonou agreement.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: They closed it down. So I started—I revitalized the Cedros breeding unit to once again have livestock being reared in that area, and the Member of Parliament for the area, the hon. Paula Gopee-Scoon, has indicated to me that it has injected a new life in the area and she was grateful for the Partnership [*Desk thumping*] for remedying the wrongs of her Government before.

Hon. Senator: "Oh God, Faris, yuh waking up de man."

Sen. Al-Rawi: No, she gave him the idea for that. [*Crosstalk*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: The other area that the Member of Parliament is looking forward to in the Point Fortin area is the revitalization of the Chatham dairy unit. Again, Mr. President, it is no surprise that for the last decade food price inflation was so high that our bill escalated to $4 billion. Our bill of that $4

billion did not come overnight. In 1962, that bill was only $9 million. What you see here of that $4 billion really represents a cumulative neglect of the agricultural sector, administrated and presided over by the PNM. What we are trying to do is roll back those years of neglect, those years—[*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Lambert: That is some shared information. "Yuh have yuh whole budget speech."

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: And, Mr. President, the PNM neglected agriculture because they thought that agriculturalists were supporters of the Opposition, [*Desk thumping*] so they starved them.

Hon. Senator: Yeah. That is the fact.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: They starved them. They tried to grind them into the dust, and that is what animated and motivated their brutal closure of Caroni (1975) Limited. And even after they closed Caroni, they failed to address the issue of the land delivery, which they promised, that Caroni (1975) Limited had to go to court and get judgment against the Government of the day.

Hon. Senator: Now they have Avinash.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Mr. President, some of the other things that they promised in their budget contributions—I read a contribution by Karen Nunez-Tesheira, promising of packing houses. Now, packing houses are very critical if you want to stabilize the prices of food in the country, so when there is a surplus, you buy it and store it, and you release it when there is a shortage. So you could promise some degree of price stability within the market. They have been talking the talk about packing houses. The concept of packing houses is not new; is not ours, but what we have done is, we have started a packing house. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: 36(1), Mr. President.

Hon. Senator: Yes, yes.

Mr. President: I did think that the Minister was introducing how inflation was being impacted [*Laughter*] and how he was trying to reduce that. I thought that was the connection he made. [*Crosstalk*]

11.15 p.m.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Mr. President, I thank you. My colleague on the other side, Sen. Ramkhelawan, specifically addressed the issue of agriculture, and he responded to the claim of Minister Howai, the Minister of Finance and the

Economy, about the food inflation and growth in the sector. Sen. Ramkhelawan, having expanded this debate to include agriculture and the agricultural achievement, I was compelled, forced, now to respond to the issues—[*Interruption*] [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. Lambert: And he came unprepared.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj:—and I was not prepared, Mr. President. I was provoked, not prepared. Food is a very critical component to inflation. When the Central Bank issues its inflation rates quarterly or monthly, they disaggregate it and tell you what component of that headline inflation comprise food inflation. Food inflation is influenced, affected and directly impacted by the commodities that contribute to our basket, and these items that I am talking about that actually constitute our basket and what affect their prices, are the measures adopted by the Ministry of Food Production and farmers in Trinidad. So that is the link.

Hon. Members: Aaaah.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: So I want to come back to the issue of these packing houses which will affect the stability of prices in the long term. [*Desk thumping*] The PNM's Minister of Finance haf been speaking in budget after—they have a copy and paste budget that they rotate from year to year in the 10 years that they were there, spoke about packing houses. They did nothing. Not a packing house under that administration.

We have started a packing house in Brechin Castle which will be the largest, now tied in with our initiative with Caroni Green, and I will come to that in a little while addressing Sen. Ramkhelawan's specific issue of these idle lands lying fallow. That packing house, once it comes on stream by the end of this month, it will be able to absorb a lot of the commodities that are out there. How we intend to do that, Mr. President? Those idle lands that so grieve and aggravate Sen. Ramkhelawan, we have introduced a new concept called Caroni Green. What we did is we varied the lease of the Caroni (1975) two-acre plots, which previously only allowed the leaseholder to occupy and utilize the land. So we varied the head lease allowing them to sublet or rent it to another party.

Caroni Green acts as a facilitator, whereby it would connect the leaseholder with a farmer who does not have land. So you do not have land but you could farm, and you have land and you cannot farm, and we put them together. So what we have found is by utilizing that model, we have brought over 400 acres of previously idle land into active production, and we have seen a tremendous impact so far with that. We have seen—and that is just the first phase. By the end

of the third phase, we hope to have an additional 5,000 acres into production. We have seen with the large farms increases in harvest of hot peppers close to 48,000 pounds; we have seen 24,000 pounds of cucumbers coming in; 15,000 pounds of tomatoes coming in.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: What?

Hon. Senator: "Yuh reach boy."

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Mr. President, the Tucker Valley agricultural project—so 100 acres bringing into production: corn, pigeon peas, bodi, ochro, sorrel, melongene, pumpkin, hot pepper, caraille, saim. And my friend, Sen. Ramkhelawan, doubted if peas and so on were being brought into production locally, but we are growing peas here in large amounts. One hundred acres of land—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Behind some land—[*Interruption*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: No, no, no! So, Mr. President, the achievements that my erstwhile colleague, Sen. Howai spoke about, about four quarters of unenviable growth in the agricultural sector, reduction of food price inflation to single digits is all a direct result of the activities of the Government in the agricultural sector.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: What about gingee? [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Mr. President, there are other measures that we have adopted in addition to our aggressive policy of renewing leases, infrastructural development. We have also addressed the issue of praedial larceny. Praedial larceny is an issue that affects all farmers because there are persons in Trinidad and Tobago who feel that there are some—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: What is that?

Sen. Al-Rawi: You are mopping liquidity with praedial larceny?

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Yeah, yeah, there is a very important point in liquidity that the farmers will grow, they will reap. For the first time—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: We mopping up the PNM, boy.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj:—we have introduced a dedicated squad, the praedial larceny prevention squad, which flows as a result of the Praedial Larceny Prevention Act of 2000, and officers that have been selected by the Ministry of

National Security are now out in the field addressing the issue of praedial larceny in farming. A pilot project was launched in Carlsen Field, Mr. President, and we saw an immediate reduction in crime in the area there. [*Crosstalk*] As a result of that, farmers could have produced a lot more comfortably and safely, and a lot more of their produce actually made it to market and was not pilfered away or destroyed.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Oooh, wonderful, wonderful. [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: Mr. President, this is the first phase. My colleague, the Minister of National Security has a second batch of praedial larceny officers who would also further expand the manpower of that unit, so as to ensure that all our farmers have the security and the confidence of the security services to protect their produce.

My friend, Sen. Al-Rawi, spoke at length about confidence, and I would like to also add my two bits in this. We are speaking about confidence in the agricultural sector and how it impacts on the national economy. [*Desk thumping*] If a farmer does not feel confident that he has the ability to grow his crop and it will be there for him to carry to market, he would not plant, and if he does not plant, there will be a shortage of food. Prices will rise, inflation will rise.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: It inspires confidence in the economy, man.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: So, it is important, it is imperative, that this praedial larceny squad has continued to grow. The pilot project has shown a definite impact in terms of where it has been implemented, and we are confident that it will further develop. The issue of labour is another very important area for agriculture.

Sen. Ramkhelawan: I thank the hon. Minister for giving way and I believe that we share the passion for agriculture, and I will certainly be asking some more direct questions with regard to absolute and relative numbers as we go forth. But I thank you for giving me the time to clarify.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj: As I said before, Mr. President, I was not prepared to speak on this Motion, but I was—[*Desk thumping*]—provoked by the assault on the agricultural sector by—[*Crosstalk*] As he said, he is my friend. But the area of labour has affected, not only the agricultural sector, you have heard many persons from the Chambers of Commerce complaining that they have the inability to secure labour for whatever operations they may have, and we, especially in the agricultural sector, have been suffering from this plague of labour, the issue of the price. Persons feel that the price of their labour is too low as what the farmer offers, and the availability of the skilled labour.

So as a result of that, we have had strategic partnership with CEPEP, OJT and URP, and as a result we have had a marginal success in the areas where we had piloted. Especially in the area of cocoa, we had a CEPEP cocoa plantation link and we have had success in there—the farmers increasing. We have farmers now requesting OJT workers, URP workers. And in the area of the Judiciary, I have partnered with my colleague, Minister Emmanuel George—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Let me deal with that in my speech when I talk after.

Sen. Al-Rawi: We waiting to hear you.

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj:—whereby those persons convicted to hard labour will now be really asked to perform hard labour on state farms. [*Desk thumping*] There are a number of state farms that require labour and instead of looking outside, we would now look to the prisons and put them to work. So instead of burning clothes, paper and so on in prison, we will have them inside a state farm—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Slash and burn method. [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. D. Maharaj:—using burn [*Crosstalk*]

So, Mr. President, I hope I would have addressed my colleague, Sen. Ramkhelawan, some of his concerns. I do not think I will ever convince him that those lands should be taken away. But I would encourage Sen. Ramkhelawan, if you feel so strongly that these lands should be brought into production and the Government should grab it away from their legally entitled owners, bring a Motion to the Parliament asking the Government to take away people land and we will debate it then. And I would like also to take this opportunity, Mr. President, that I know Sen. Ramkhelawan also is in possession of about five, six acres of agricultural land, to bring those lands first into production—[*Desk thumping and laughter*]—before he asks anybody else to bring their land into production.

Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Minister of Finance and the Economy. [*Desk thumping*] Minister, it seems to have escaped my eye that Sen. Edwards wanted to catch my eye. [*Desk thumping*] Sen. Edwards.

Sen. Dr. Aysha Edwards: Thank you, Mr. President. Good night. Thank you for the opportunity to add to the debate. I am in no way an expert or a student of economy or finance. As a matter of fact, in my education I have done neither. However, in my humble understanding of this Motion, it seeks to increase the liquid asset of the country if I am understanding this correctly. So I actually have only two questions, so this will be very short:

One. What is the formula used or being applied to come up with the figures to move from $5 billion to $15 billion and, if so, why not $5 billion to $10 billion or $5 billion to $20 billion? Because nowhere in the discussion tonight has that formula or the methodology for that been brought forward, and for someone who does not understand economics, I would like to know what is the formula for that.

Two. Liquid asset is not the only strategy for debt absorption, nor is it the best strategy for debt absorption from my reading. Usually, it is a part of a comprehensive programme that Government developed to reduce that. So I would like to know from the Minister of Finance and the Economy what other strategies he is putting forward in addition to this to reduce that, because this cannot be the basis for which we are going to reduce the debt in this country.

It is quite interesting to hear the debate that has extended beyond the issue, but I would hope that in wrapping up, the Minister would come back to the issue that he has been debating and explain to me, whether it is coming later or if he has it now, what strategies he will be using to reduce debt in this country as opposed to coming back time and time again, asking for an increase.

Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Minister of Finance and the Economy. [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai): Thank you, Mr. President. Well, I do not think there is any need for me to expand further on the agricultural sector. [*Desk thumping*] I think I have dealt with that matter in sufficient detail.

I would just like to, in closing what has been a long day of debate, just deal with a few of the issues which have come up during the course of this evening, one of which, of course, relates to first of all the size of the increase that we are asking for.

In fact, the increase that we are asking for actually moves us from, as we said, $15 billion to $30 billion in one case, in the case of T-Bills, and from $5 billion to $15 billion in the case of the T-Notes, and to a large extent, the increases are tied in to the increase that we have seen in the level of deposits in the system over the past few years.

11.30 p.m.

In fact, over the past two years—three years—sorry—between 2010 and 2012, or if we use 2013, the total value of deposits in the system actually increased from $73 billion to $93 billion. If we go back a little further, if we look at 2008 to the present time, which is not very long because you are talking around the time when

we had the crisis—the financial crisis to the present time, and we have not yet recovered from that financial crisis—the total value of the deposits in the system was $56 billion and that has increased now currently to $93 billion or by about 80 per cent over that five-year period.

The intention with this is not so much to immediately issue all of the bonds—all of the bills and the bonds immediately into the system but to provide sufficient flexibility for the Central Bank that they do not have to be coming back at regular intervals to the House to have an increase in the limit. So, for example, between 2003 to 2000—in 2003, the limit was $5 billion, and in 2006, it has moved from $5 billion to $15 billion for T-Bills. So that there was quite a significant increase during that time but the rate of increase in the deposit base was less than we are facing now.

The idea is to ensure that as that deposit base continues to increase and as the build-up of liquidity continues to increase, that the Central Bank had the tools available to it to allow it to be able to mop up this surplus liquidity in the system. We have seen quite a significant, as I said, increase in the deposit base of the banks over the past five years.

With respect to the overall debt figures, again, I just want to emphasize that these figures are not—while we do include it as part of the overall debt, because the funds are sterilized, it is not counted from the point of view of the rating agencies or the international lending agencies, the multi-lateral financing agencies, as part of the overall debt of the country, because funds are sterilized and it can be used to repay the loans or these particular bills when they become due. So therefore, it is not part of the overall debt numbers of the country as a whole and I just wanted to emphasize that.

I do accept the fact that inflation is not currently an issue. It has been relatively—things have improved, it is relatively under control. It is, in fact, a lot better than it was before. So again, these particular instruments and the approvals and the limits that we are creating here, it is not because we need to rush out and do anything immediately, but rather that the facility is there so that as monetary conditions change, the Central Bank has the flexibility to go into the market at any time.

So, I think, overall, Mr. President, you know, those were some of the issues that seem to have come up during the course of the discussion. This is intended to be another weapon which is added to the armoury of the Central Bank. The Central Bank has already—I mean, they are not suggesting that in any way they

will go out now and do open-market operations to the extent of the amount of the Bills that they have available to them, but that it is simply a facility that they have available in the event that they need it.

So, Mr. President, with those few words, I would like to beg to move. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put.

Sen. Cudjoe: Division.

Sen. Dr. Maharaj: Division.

Sen. Maharaj: Rowley side and the other side! [*Laughter*]

The Senate divided: Ayes 15 Noes 8

AYES

Singh, Hon. G.

Coudray, Hon. M.

Ramlogan SC, Hon. A.

Howai, Hon. L.

Griffith, Hon. G.

Hadeed, Hon. G.

George, Hon. E.

Tewarie, Hon. Dr. B.

Moheni, Hon. E.

Lambert, J.

Maharaj, Hon. D.

Ahmed, Hon. R.

Ramnarine, Hon. K.

Burke, Archbishop B.

Sturge, W.

NOES

Beckles, Mrs. P.

Hinds, F.

Henry, Dr. L.

Cudjoe, Miss S.

Al-Rawi, F.

Mahabir, Dr. D.

Vieira, A.

Edwards, Dr. A.

Mr. S. Ramkhelawan and Dr. V. Wheeler abstained.

Question agreed to.

Resolved:

That for the purposes of promoting monetary credit and exchange conditions most favourably to the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, the Minister of Finance and the Economy is hereby authorized to borrow such further sum or sums in Trinidad and Tobago, not exceeding in the aggregate, fifteen thousand million Trinidad and Tobago dollars or the equivalent thereof in any foreign currency or currencies, by the issue of Notes.

TREASURY BILLS ACT
(INCREASE IN BORROWING)

The Minister of Finance and the Economy (Sen. The Hon. Larry Howai): Mr. President, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:—just now; make sure—yes, so I have it. This is Motion No. (IV), Mr. President. Right? "Yeah."

Whereas section 2(1) of the Treasury Bills Act, Chap. 71:40 provides that the Minister of Finance and the Economy may borrow in Trinidad and Tobago such sum or sums not exceeding in the aggregate, two thousand million Trinidad and Tobago dollars or the equivalent thereof in any foreign currency or currencies and such further sum or sums as may be specified by resolution of Parliament, or the equivalent thereof in any foreign currency or currencies, by the issue of Treasury Bills; and

Whereas it is necessary for the Minister of Finance and the Economy to borrow further sums of money for the purpose of facilitating the conduct of open market operations by the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago:

Be it resolved that for the purposes of facilitating the conduct of open market operations by the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, the Minister of Finance and the Economy is hereby authorized to borrow such further sum or sums in Trinidad and Tobago, not exceeding in the aggregate, thirty thousand million Trinidad and Tobago dollars or the equivalent thereof in any foreign currency or currencies, by the issue of Treasury Bills.

Mr. President, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Question put.

Sen. Cudjoe: Division.

The Senate divided: Ayes 15 Noes 9

AYES

Singh, Hon. G.

Coudray, Hon. M.

Ramlogan SC, Hon. A.

Howai, Hon. L.

Griffith, Hon. G.

Hadeed, Hon. G.

George, Hon. E.

Tewarie, Hon. Dr. B.

Moheni, Hon. E.

Lambert, J.

Maharaj, Hon. D.

Ahmed, Hon. R.

Ramnarine, Hon. K.

Burke, Archbishop B.

Sturge, W.

NOES

Beckles, Mrs. P.

Hinds, F.

Henry, Dr. L.

Cudjoe, Miss S.

Al-Rawi, F.

Mahabir, Dr. D.

Vieira, A.

Edwards, Dr. A.

Sen. Maharaj: You have Rolph [*Inaudible*]

The Clerk: "Oh, he is there."

NOES

Balgobin, Dr. R.

Sen. Maharaj: "If ah did know that, I would not call yuh name." [*Laughter*]

Mr. S. Ramkhelawan and Dr. V. Wheeler abstained.

Question agreed to.

Resolved:

That for the purposes of facilitating the conduct of open market operations by the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, the Minister of Finance and the Economy is hereby authorized to borrow such further sum or sums in Trinidad and Tobago, not exceeding in the aggregate, thirty thousand million Trinidad and Tobago dollars or the equivalent thereof in any foreign currency or currencies, by the issue of Treasury Bills.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Mr. President, I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to December 10, 2013 at 1.30 p.m. and we will do the Motion on tobacco regulations on that day. [*Crosstalk*] No. 1 on the Order Paper.

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, before I put the question on the adjournment, leave has been granted for a matter to be raised on the Motion for the Adjournment of the Senate and therefore I call upon Sen. Hinds.

Transit Police Unit
(Details of)

Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds: [*Desk thumping*] Thank you, Mr. President. I sought your leave in accordance with Standing Order 11 to raise the following Motion:

> The need for the Government to ensure that systems are in place with respect to the transit police unit; to facilitate the issuance of contracts of employment; the prompt payment of salaries, and that proper accommodation be made available to staff.

Mr. President, the transit unit was established in September 2005 with a sanctioned strength of 96 personnel. The Unit's main focus was to conduct policing, law and order activities, along the Priority Bus Route, City Gate Port of Spain, Route 1 Maxi Taxi Stand, South Quay, Port of Spain, and the Arima Route 2 Maxi Taxi Stand. On being recruited, these 96 persons were accorded certain salaries. I do not think it is necessary to detail them here.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: "Nah, nah, nah, doh do that!"

Hon. Senator: "Yuh eh have enough time."

Sen. Maharaj: "Yuh eh have enough time."

Sen. F. Hinds: But the Cabinet Minute which authorized the establishment of the Unit stated that there was to be a review of its performance after one year. [*Crosstalk*] Because of administrative problems, no written contracts were executed by the officers during the first year. The requisite staff was recruited in three batches: August 2005, [*Crosstalk*] another 16 were recruited in October of that same year, 2005, and 14 were recruited in February, 2006. Cabinet, by Minute No. 2287, dated September 07, 2006, extended the life of the Unit by two years to 2008.

11.45 p.m.

Again, no contracts were executed. The Minute also granted approval for the employment of five additional corporals and twenty constables. In June, 2008, the Ministry of National Security commissioned Congress Global Consulting to conduct an audit [*Crosstalk*] to measure the effectiveness of the Unit. It looked at the area of governance as being unsatisfactory, while the area of organizational capability, operational planning and performance management were rated as fair.

Following a review of this report by the Ministry, it was determined that the operations of the Unit were not only useful, but essential, in the context of effective law enforcement. As you know, Mr. President, these officers are properly trained, they wear grey and blue, and they carry out these duties, as the

review showed, pretty effectively. Their presence contributes to the deterrent element that the Minister is now very regularly speaking about, and these officers, as a matter of practicality, get involved in law and order enforcement, other than in the strict areas of their mandate. They, in other words, make a major contribution to law enforcement activities wherever they are.

Mr. President, Cabinet, by way of Minute No. 2590 dated September 18, 2008, extended the life of the Unit by another year, to 2009 and by Minute 2279 dated August 20, 2009, another year, up to 2010. The Unit was then made permanent by way of Cabinet Minute No. 347, Second Session, dated July 29, 2010. The manpower of the Unit was increased in 2010 with the addition of one superintendent, one assistant superintendent, four corporals and twenty-five constables.

Mr. President, the officers who were recruited in August, 2005 have been paid their contract gratuities, as of course you know, Mr. President, at the end of the contract period, typically, one is entitled to 20 per cent of the gross earnings for the period under review or the contractual period. And those officers were paid for the period 2005—2007, and 2007—2009; while those recruited in October, 2005 and February, 2006 received their gratuities for the period up to 2008, no contract gratuities have been paid other than those as indicated above.

There has never been any adjustment to the salaries paid to members of this Unit, and the current salaries are exactly what they were in 2005 when the Unit got going. On February 22, 2013, there was an official arrangement for the promotion of some of these officers, from the rank of constables to the rank of corporals, and while that was done—and the Deputy Permanent Secretary was present, from the Ministry of National Security, the Director and Deputy of the OLEP, the Office of Law Enforcement Policy, and the Director of the Transit Police Unit—these officers were given their letters of promotion, but they have not received salaries commensurate with those elevated positions.

And, Mr. President, this, as you know, has caused tremendous anxiety and concern, and grouse, if I may use a typical military word, on the part of these very unfortunate officers. It is well known that military personnel, paramilitary personnel, like police, I do not think we could really pay them for the work that they do. They say an army—and the Minister would know this—runs on its stomach and it fights on morale. Similarly, with the police service, morale is really the key. They look to their leadership for leadership, and their morale, when it is high, they go well beyond the call of duty.

Let me give a very unfortunate example—that failed state of emergency, but during the period of the failed state of emergency, officers of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and officers of the Transit Unit went out there and cleared up the backlog of warrants that would have been sitting around at police precincts for many years. They got active during the period and they arrested about 8,000 people on outstanding warrants, from ticketing offences to maintenance offences, and the rest of that is very sordid history. I do not think it is necessary for me to mention what else happened there, but that is the state of affairs.

The morale of the men and women of this Unit is particularly low, particularly low. In terms of accommodation where they are based down at the VMCOTT site in Laventille, I understand that the facility, for the female officers, is very, very poor, very negligible and the situation is quite, quite humiliating. So it is my Motion that this Government recognizes the need to put proper systems in place, to facilitate the issuance of contracts—and I know that the Minister may rise to his legs in a short while, and would spend time talking about "what yuh did do and what yuh didn do". That is not the point—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senator: [*Inaudible*] after twelve. [*Laughter*]

Sen. F. Hinds:—the issue is that we have another problem on our hands. The morale of these men and women is low. The situation is what it is. They have informed me that they approached the previous Minister of National Security and they were rebuffed. He had very unkind things to say. I have advised them to disregard that. I do not see this as a political issue. I see this as an issue of morale, and we have a unit that is not functioning optimally and it is adversely affecting our targets and our plans to deal with criminal activity and lawlessness in the society.

I am asking the Government to ensure that, very promptly, persons are paid because if you do not do that, legal action would ensue. And I have been asked by officers of the Unit to say so categorically to the Government, from this platform. And to indicate, as well, that in their frustration they have sought meetings with the Director of OLEP, and so far they have been—they have had a meeting but nothing has been done. A letter was—or letters have been written to the Prime Minister, in abject frustration, and the last two letters went unanswered. They feel rebuffed and they are contemplating action that is unbecoming of a policing unit.

So I put this squarely to the Government today and call upon it, as the Executive, as the directing mind, and leadership organization in Trinidad and Tobago, to take action to ensure that these minor matters are promptly resolved, so at least one arm of the policing fraternity would be satisfied with high morale and do justice in their service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Minister of National Security.

Hon. Senator: "Yuh have seven minutes." [*Inaudible*]

The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Gary Griffith): Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President it is now 23:53 hours and it is very good that the goodly Senator—it shows once an officer, always an officer; once in uniform, always in uniform. For the goodly Senator to bring this up at this hour, it shows his passion and his interest, and his concern over his fellow law enforcement officers, and on that I commend him. [*Desk thumping*]

So that I could finish in seven minutes before his coach turns into a pumpkin, [*Laughter*] let me explain the importance of this Unit. Regardless of the Unit, whether it is Predial Larceny, Highway Patrol, Rapid Response, Municipal or even Transit, each and every one of these Units, they may be seen as small, but they play a very critical part in the whole law enforcement process.

Dealing, Mr. President, as Sen. Hinds spoke about, the Cabinet approval was indeed given for this Unit, in 2005, for a period of one year. The life of the Unit was extended by a two-year period followed by two one-year periods. In July 2010, Cabinet agreed to permanently establish the TPU and employ, on contract, Transit Police Officers for a period of three years, with effect from the dates of their assumption of duty.

Mr. President, the main role of the TPU was established to address the increasing incidence of robbery and other criminal acts perpetrated against the travelling public, and in particular maxi taxi operators and their passengers. In fact, just a few weeks ago, I actually met with the Maxi Taxi Association and they spoke about different concerns that they had from even the touts at the stands, and persons being involved in criminal activities in the maxi taxis.

I met with the relevant law enforcement officers, and apart from the transit police, just for information, we actually have covert operatives, undercover officers in the maxi taxis as well, and it has played a very big part in reducing that criminal activity. But owing to the escalating crime situation on the East-West Corridor, as we mentioned, the TPU, their primary responsibility is to service the areas of Route 1 Maxi Taxi, the yellow band, and Route 2.

Mr. President, since its establishment, the TPU has strived and continues to make every effort to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in all its operations but, as Sen. Hinds has mentioned, if morale is low, if they do not have the resources, if they do not have the proper facilities, they would not be able to perform to

optimal level, so this I agree with. Despite the challenges, however, and the constraints as regards to manpower shortages, the TPU has been successful in carrying out its mandate. In light of this, it is important to ensure that the men and women who have so valiantly carried out their duties in spite of the trials that they had to face, they are treated with care and respect that they duly deserve, and that we intend to give to them.

We will continue to support the TPU in all its endeavours and we remain committed to ensuring that the Unit is provided with what is required. As regard to the contracts of the employment, Mr. President, for the Transit Police Unit, the arrangement for issuing the contracts is the same as with non-uniformed personnel in the public service. And the structure, step one, ministerial approval is sought for appointments on terms and conditions to be negotiated with the Chief Personnel Officer. After this, we then move to step 2, once received from the CPO, the agreement is then submitted to the Ministry of National Security for approval and upon receipt of the ministerial approval, further steps are taken to have the relevant contracts prepared.

Mr. President, in May, 2013, at a meeting held with the Permanent Secretary and representatives of the Transit Police Officers, it was agreed that officers will retain their existing terms and conditions of employment for the period 2008—2012. Please be advised that the CPO has also been engaged with respect to the facilitation of the payment of gratuity for this period and a reply is being awaited. In addition, Mr. President, recommendations for revised terms and conditions of employment for the Transit Police Officers, which include an increase in salary, are similarly now engaging the attention of the CPO.

Mr. President, I wish to also advise that the officers employed under contracted services in the TPU have entered into agreements to provide Transit Police service for a fee, pending Cabinet's decision regarding further employment on contract in the Unit. This agreement stipulates that the fees would be paid on the last working day of the month. As it pertains to accommodation, the TPU headquarters, as stated by Sen. Hinds, it is currently housed in the VMCOTT facility. A space needs analysis was conducted, of that area, in 2012 and the findings revealed concerns with respect to a lack of space and insufficient infrastructure.

In light of this, steps are currently being undertaken to renovate and expand the headquarters located on the VMCOTT compound and to open a substation at City Gate in Port of Spain. The expansion phase would include much needed additional dormitory space. Other plans for improvement, Mr. President, while the

question of salaries is presently with the CPO for increases, and accommodation issues are being addressed, the Ministry of National Security, we would continue to work to improve the standard of the TPU.

Mr. President, in 2008, the Ministry engaged the services of consultants to conduct a management audit, to measure the effectiveness of this Unit. The consultants' report highlighted certain weaknesses which included inadequate technological support and human resource challenges. Consequently, in 2009, the human resource capability of the unit was enhanced by an increase of 30 officers including a superintendent and an assistant superintendent. Concern however, Mr. President, if we look at 55 per cent of these officers, are at least 55 years of age. So it is recommended that further employment on contract in the Unit should be made by way of advertisements with a view to attracting younger applicants. It is felt that the scope of the Unit should be expanded to encompass these younger recruits, who it is felt would add to the value of the Unit.

12.00 midnight

Mr. President, just to conclude, I would assure Sen. Hinds, apart from the fact that—[*Interruption*]

Hon. Senators: Former Senator.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith: It is now midnight. Let me have the pleasure of being the last one to say, and I wish to assure Sen. Hinds—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Well said.

Sen. The Hon. G. Griffith:—that I will do everything in my power to assist them and in fact I will ensure, by this week or early next week, I will meet with them personally. I was aware of the letter that was sent by your good self to OLEP about the concerns of these officers and I will meet with them personally. I will speak to them, see what other concerns that they have and we will move with it as quickly as possible. Because as I said, as the goodly Senator has said, that if morale is low, performance would be low and we intend to lift their morale, provide them with the assets and the logistics and the support that they require, so they can perform and then be considered Trinidad and Tobago's finest. Mr. President, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Farewell
(Fitzgerald Hinds and Pennelope Beckles)

Mr. President: Hon. Senators, before I put the question for an adjournment, I have given leave to Sen. Ramkhelawan to make a short address to you.

Sen. Subhas Ramkhelawan: Thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me just a few moments to say a few words in respect of the time that we in this Senate have spent collectively with Sen. Hinds and Sen. Beckles.

I am aware that the service that has been provided by these two fine Senators will come to an end as we speak. When I first met Mr. Hinds about three years ago in this Chamber I tried to understand his approach and his style and he told me, and I hope that I am quoting him correctly, that his role was to deal with the raw politics and if that was the case, I think he has done an excellent and admirable job in dealing with the raw politics. [*Desk thumping*] Whether or not I agreed with his contributions, I always admired his fiery style and his form of delivery and I want to thank him for the contributions that he has made in this Senate—[*Desk thumping*]—and wish him well in his other endeavours. I am sure many of them will continue to be political in nature.

As to my good friend, Sen. Beckles, decent, calm and collective—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: The extreme opposite. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan:—has always been her credo. [*Desk thumping*] And from the Independent Bench, even though we may have changed a bit during the beginning of the term, we want to say that we really deeply appreciate the quality and the content of the contributions of Sen. Beckles and she was always there to share a word and thought, with me in particular, on the politics of this country and the outlook for this country, if not in here, outside of the Chamber.

So, on behalf of the Independent Bench and indeed on behalf of the entire Senate—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Al-Rawi: Thank you.

Sen. S. Ramkhelawan:—I want to say best wishes to you on your endeavours and I am sure we will meet again in a political sense. Thank you, Mr. President. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Leader of Government Business.

The Minister of the Environment and Water Resources (Sen. The Hon. Ganga Singh): Mr. President, I do not intend to be as presumptive as the Independent coordinate of the Bench, having regard that we have had no formal notice of the removal of Sen. Beckles and Sen. Hinds and I would keep my powder dry until we have formal notice.

Mr. President: Sen. Hinds would like to reply to you. He will. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Beckles: "Yuh doh have notice."

Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds: Simply, Mr. President, to say in the spirit of dignity and courtesy—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Aah.

Sen. F. Hinds:—that I appreciate the sentiments expressed by Sen. Ramkhelawan and I say so—Sen. Beckles has already spoken on this matter—on both her and my behalf and to say as well that I benefited tremendously from the opportunity to have served in this Senate. The time I served here, of course, has been added on to the time I served in the other House, a total of about 15 and a half years—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Singh: For pension purposes. [*Laughter*]

Sen. F. Hinds:—and I do record that it was a tremendous experience for which I am thankful to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, thankful to the political leaders of the PNM who would have been responsible for my recruitment and my being here and, of course, I want to take this opportunity as well to thank all of my colleagues for whatever role they may have played in the service that we all extended in this House.

But most of all, most of all, I have said a thousand times, Mr. President, that I have never come to the staff of this Parliament and been rebuffed on any matter at any time. In other words, any request that I made of the staff of the Parliament over the 15 and a half years, was adequately satisfied, admirably satisfied. And I would like to specially thank the Clerk of the House, the Clerk of the Senate and all the staff of the Parliament for the kind of service that they provide all of us—[*Interruption*]

Sen. Ramlogan SC: Well said.

Sen. F. Hinds:—in doing the work that we must do in service of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

And finally, I want to say to my colleagues, speak not of my death, there is a lot of time and energy left. I thank you very warmly. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. President: Thank you, Senators.

Sen. Ramlogan SC: "Who yuh was talking 'bout dey?"

Mr. President: Of course, I do not think you were here but Sen. Beckles did have some earlier words and therefore I did express my best wishes to both of you in your future endeavours.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 12.07 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Agricultural Development Bank (Details of Persons Employed)

1. Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds asked the hon. Minister of Food Production:

A. Would the Minister kindly indicate the number of persons who were employed by the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) during the period 1st July, 2010 to present?

B. Would the Minister indicate the names, highest academic or vocational qualification, experience, positions held, dates of their respective engagements/appointments and the salary/emoluments of each employee engaged/appointed by the ABD during the said period?

The following reply was circulated to Members of the Senate.

The Minister of Food Production (Sen. The Hon. Devant Maharaj):

NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED	DATE OF EMPLOYMENT	POSITION HELD	HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS	PREVIOUS WORK EXPEDRIENCE	SALARY	TRAVELLING/ OTHER ALLOWANCES
1	2010 July 26th	Loans Officer 1	BSc Agribusiness Management	No previous work experience	$9,620.00	$2,000.00
2	2010 August 11th	Messenger! Cleaner (Temporary)	School Leaving Certificate	Seamstress	$3,852.00	
3	20 I 0 December 08th	Driver	Diploma in Computer Repairs & Maintenance	Sales Manager for four years	$4,422.00	
4	2010 December 10th	Executive Secretary (Ag)	5 CXC Passes	Data Entry Clerk & Clerical Assistant in 2010	$6,267.00	
5	20 10 December 7th	Clerk/Typist (Temporary)	8 CXC Passes, 3 A Levels	Clerical Officer & Medical Records Clerk for one year	$4,353.00	

NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED	DATE OF EMPLOYMENT	POSITION HELD	HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS	PREVIOUS WORK EXPEDRIENCE	SALARY	TRAVELLING/ OTHER ALLOWANCES
6	2010 July 19th	Clerk/Typist	7 CXC passes, Certificate in Computer Literacy	Cashier & an OJT	$4,559.00	
7	2010 October 12th	Records Officer (Contract)	4 CXC Passes, Secretarial Certificate, Certificate In Computer Literacy Certificate in Public Relations	Clerical Assistant for sixteen years	$5,558.00	
8	2010 October 25th	Clerk/Typist (Temporary)	Advanced Diploma in Business Management	Clerk/Typist for ten months, Clerk/Typist for five months, Clerk/Typist for two months	$4,353.00	
9	2010 October 25th	Clerk/ Typist (Temporary)	5 CXC Passes Associates of Chartered Certified Accountant	Accounts Clerk, Clerical Assistant& Receptionist	$4,353.00	
10	20 I 0 September 01st	Loans Officer 1	BSc. Agribusiness Management	Technical Assistant trainee & Temporary Clerk for two years	$9,113.00	$2,000.00
11	2010 September 01st	Loans Officer I	BSc. Environmental and Natural Resource Management	Binary Assistant at UWI for three years, ECIAF as an Administrative Assistant from 2008 to 2009	$9,620.00	$2,000.00
12	2010 September 01st	Deputy Branch Manager (Ag) at UWI	BSc Agribusiness Management	Summer Intern at North Central Regional Health Authority as a Medical Records Trainee	$10,133.00	$2,500.00
13	2010 September 01st	Deputy Branch Manager (Ag)	BSc. Agribusiness Management from UWI	Research Assistant for three months & Clerical Assistant via the OJT Program.	$10,133.00	$2,500;00
14	2010 September 01st	Loans Officer I	BSc. Agribusiness Management	OJT Trainee	$9,360.00	$2,000.00

NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED	DATE OF EMPLOYMENT	POSITION HELD	HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS	PREVIOUS WORK EXPEDRIENCE	SALARY	TRAVELLING/ OTHER ALLOWANCES
15	2010 September 01st	Loans Officer I	BSc. Agribusiness and Minor Human Resource Management from UWI	Marketing Assistant Intern, Intern in 2008 Eteck Human Resources Assistant in 2009	$9,113.00	$2,000.00
16	2011 April 11th	Corporate Manager-Business Dev.	Msc Marketing from Arthur Lok Jack, Post Graduate School of Business	Business Development Manager for four years, Manager for one year, Lecturer	$18,000.00	$2,500.00
17	2011 April 19th	Loans Officer I	Bsc Agribusiness Management and Entrepreneur	Clerical Assistant for eleven months & Clerk	$9,113.00	$2,000.00
18	2011 December 22nd	Clerk/Typist	Advance Certificate in Human Resources Management, Advance Certificate in Sales & Marketing Management	Administrative Assistant II for one year & Receptionist for one year	$4,353.00	
19	2011 July 04th	Messenger/Cleaner (Temporary)	1 O' Level (English)	Sales Clerk 3 years, Supervisor 8 months	$3,852.00	
20	2011 March 01st	Coordinator Special Projects (Contract)	Diploma in Business Administration	Project Coordinator six years and nine months	$9,113.00	$2,000.00
21	2011 March 21st	Executive Secretary	Certified Administrative Assistant from INTAD, Certification in Information Technology YTEPP	Isecretary for eight years & Executive Assistant for three years	1 $6,685.00	
22	2011 November 01st	Corporate Manager Human Resources	Masters of Business Administration emphasis on Leadership Entrepreneurship and Innovation from Anglia Ruskin University London	Supervisor Human Resources & Purchasing for seven years, Sales & Marketing Assistant for five months, Administrative Assistant for two years, Human Resources Officer for five years	$21,000.00	$3,000.00

NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED	DATE OF EMPLOYMENT	POSITION HELD	HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS	PREVIOUS WORK EXPEDRIENCE	SALARY	TRAVELLING/ OTHER ALLOWANCES
23	2011 November 01st	Corporate Manager Credit	Masters in Business Administration from Herriot University, Bsc Management Studies from UWI	Business Development Officer for six years, Credit Risk Officer for four years, Relationship Manager for five years	$22,300.00	$3,000.00
24	2011 November 21st	Corporate Communications Assistant (Contract)	Bachelors in Business Management from Anglia Ruskin University London	Contract Administrator Assistant Trainee for two years Senior Human Resources Assistant in 2011	$8,215.00	
25	2011 November 21st	Clerk/Typist (Temporary)	3 CXC Passes	Teacher's Assistant, Care Taker & Security Officer	$4,353.00	
26	2011 November 28th	Manager- Mobile Banking	Associates Degree in Accounting	Chief Executive Officer for four years, Financial Controller/ Administrative Manager! Assistant Director for four years	$11,737.00	$2,500.00
27	2011 October 03rd	Clerk/Typist (Temporary)	7 CXC Passes,	Clerical Assistant for nine months, Customer Service Representative for ten months	$4,353.00	
28	2011 October 10th	Clerk/Typist	6 CXC Passes, Certificate in Hospitality Management	Law Clerk/Secretary/Receptionist for fourteen months & Sales Representative	$4,353.00	
29	2011 October 11th	Clerk/Typist (Temporary)	6 CXC, Certificate in Typing & Computer Literacy	Office Assistant for six months, Senior Secretary/ Underwriter for six years, Underwriter for one year	$4,353.00	

NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED	DATE OF EMPLOYMENT	POSITION HELD	HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS	PREVIOUS WORK EXPEDRIENCE	SALARY	TRAVELLING/ OTHER ALLOWANCES
30	2011 October 24th	Audit Assistant	BSc. Agribusiness Management	Clerical Assisatnt OJT for six months, Laboratory Assistant for three months, Inventory Assistant from January 2010	$9,360.00	$2,000.00
31	2012 April 10th	Clerk/Typist	Advanced Diploma in Business Management! Association of Business Executives	Reservation Agent I year,	$4,353.00	
32	2012 December 10th	Loans Officer I	Bsc Accounting from UWI	Sales & Accounting Clerk for four years, Telemarketer, Microsoft Office Specialist Tutor in 2010	$9,113.00	$2,000.00
33	2012 December 10th	Loans Officer I	Bsc Agribusiness Management and minor in Economics from UWI	Lab Trainee in 2005 & 2006 during summer, Procurement Assistant in 2008-2009, Materials Assistant in March 20 I0 to April 2011, Administrative Assistant in May 2011 to December 2012	$9,113.00	$2,000.00
34	2012 December 10th	Clerk/Typist	Diploma 1 from the Association of Business Executives	Clerical Assistant for four years and six months	$4,353.00	
35	2012 December 17th	Clerk/Typist (Temporary)	Bachelors in Business Administration	Marketing Assistant for two years and nine months, Administrative Assistant for five months, Teaching Assistant for seven months, OJT and Clerical Officer I for five months	$6,267.00	$2,000.00

NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED	DATE OF EMPLOYMENT	POSITION HELD	HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS	PREVIOUS WORK EXPEDRIENCE	SALARY	TRAVELLING/ OTHER ALLOWANCES
36	2012 December 17th	Relationship Officer	Diploma in Agriculture- ECIAF	Assistant Agricultural Assistant 1- OJT, Development Officer/Sales Representative	$5,560.00	
37	2012 December 17th	Loans Officer I	7 CXC Passes, 4 A Levels, Certificate in Business Management from Sims	HSE Officer on contract for two years, Personal Banking Officer for three years	$9,311.00	
38	2012 January 3rd	Manager-Corporate Communication	Bsc Agribusiness Management, Masters Certificate in Adobe Illustrator & Photoshop from SBCS, Masters Certificate in Project Manager from UWI	Market Information Officer (Ag) for eighteen months, Project Officer for four years,	$17,000.00	$2,500.00
39	2012 July 12th	Clerk/Typist	7 CXC Passes	Manager for five years, OJT Clerical Officer for two years	$4,353.00	
40	2012 July 23rd	Clerk/Typist	7 CXC Passes	Accounting Assistant/Payroll Officer/Secretary for fifteen months, Quality for Controller! Lab Controller for seven years	$4,353.00	
41	2012 July 24th	Loans Officer I	6 CXC Passes, Advanced Proficiency Diploma	No Work Experience	$9,113.00	$2,000.00
42	2012 July 25th	Clerk/Typist	5 CXC, Certificate in Web Page Design	Data Entry Clerk	$4,353.00	$3,500.00

NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED	DATE OF EMPLOYMENT	POSITION HELD	HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS	PREVIOUS WORK EXPEDRIENCE	SALARY	TRAVELLING/ OTHER ALLOWANCES
43	2012 July 30th	Chief Executive Officer	Executive Masters in Business Administration with Distinction Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business	General Manager/Treasurer for nine months, General Manager for four years and two months, Finance Manager for one year, Operations Supervisor for one year, Assistant Accountant for ten months, Accounting Assistant for ten months Accounts Clerk for one year and three months.	$35,500.00	$5,800.00
44	2012 June 1st	Deputy Branch Manager	Bsc Agribusiness Management	Marketing Coordinator for six months, Marketing Assistant for one year and eight months	$10,133.00	$2,500.00
45	2012 May 03rd	Branch Manager - Tobago	Bachelors in Business Administration from University of Whales in the UK, Chattered Certificate in Accounts	Manager for six years, Assistant to the Managing Director	$11,737.00	
46	2012 May 07th	Driver	National Examination Council Certificate	Security Officer! Courier for eight years	$4,522.00	$2,000.00
47	2012 May 07th	Supervisor Properties & Purchasing	Certificate in Business Management/Association of Business Executives	General Manager's Assistant for five years, Production Supervisor for two years, Quality Control Supervisor for seven years, Customer service representative for one year	$9,113.00	$2,000.00

NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED	DATE OF EMPLOYMENT	POSITION HELD	HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS	PREVIOUS WORK EXPEDRIENCE	SALARY	TRAVELLING/ OTHER ALLOWANCES
48	2012 May 14th	Loans Officer I	BSc. Information Systems & Management from the University of London	Desk Sales Clerk, Information Technology Trainee for two and a half months, Administrative Assistant, Accounting Assistant, Production Sales Clerk for four months, Tax Monitoring Officer	$9,113.00	$2,000.00
49	2012 May 14th	Loans Officer 1	International Masters in Business Administration Arthur Lok Jack, Masters of Science in Information Computing & Telecommunication	Lecturer for five years, Operations Supervisor until May 2012	$9,113.00	$3,000.00
50	2012 May 7th	Loans Officer 1	Bsc Agribusiness Management	HSE Assistant for nine months, Clerical Assistant for four months, Intern for six weeks	$9,113.00	
51	2012 November 01st	Corporate Manager Communications	Bachelors of Art in Business Administration from the University of Hertfordshire	Ten years Experience in a temporary pool in various Departments, Confidential Secretary for two years, Executive Administrative Assistant for eight years	$20,000.00	$3,000.00
52	2012 November 19th	Corporate Manager-Operations	Bsc Business Management minor in Finance	Agent for five year, Director in 2009, Two years Experience	$19,000.00	$2,700.00
53	2012 October 08th	Clerk/Typist (Temporary)	6 CXC Passes, Certificates in Health & Safety Practical Application- Unit of the NEBOSH, Certificate Health & Safety	Accounts Assistant for one year, Office Supervisor for eight years	$4,353.00	

NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED	DATE OF EMPLOYMENT	POSITION HELD	HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS	PREVIOUS WORK EXPEDRIENCE	SALARY	TRAVELLING/ OTHER ALLOWANCES
54	2012 October 30th	Clerk/Typist	5 CXC passes, Certificate of Proficiency in computer literacy, Certificate in Introduction to OSHA	No Work Experience	$4,353.00	
55	2012 October 8th	Messenger/ Cleaner (Temporary)	Certificate in Computer Literacy, Certificate in Youth Development Services, Certificate in Elderly Care	Unemployment Relief Programme	$3,852.00	
56	2012 September 10th	Clerk 1 (Temporary)	7CXC	Office Assistant, Team Leader for three months, Bar Tender/ Cashier for eight months	$4,353.00	
57	2013 April 24th	Loans Officer 1	Bsc Agribusiness Management and minor in Entrepreneurship	Handyman for nine months	$9,113.00	
58	2013 August 13th	Clerk/Typist (Temporary)	9 CXC Passes, Associates in Business Executives	Customer Service Representative for six months, Sales Assistant, Social Studies Teacher for five years.	$4,353.00	
59	2013 August 13th	Clerk/Typist	6 CXC Passes, Certificate in Computer Literacy, Practical Accounting Certificate one year	Administrative Secretary for three years, Secretary for	$4,353.00	
60	2013 August 19th	Clerk/Typist (Temporary)	8 CXC Passes, 5 A Levels	Warehouse Assistant for four years	$4,353.00	
61	2013 August 28th	Messenger/Cleaner (Temporary)	Nil	Nil		
62	2013 January 03rd	Computer Programmer	Bsc Information Technology - University Hertfordshire	Information Technology Technician for five years	$8,870.00	

NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED	DATE OF EMPLOYMENT	POSITION HELD	HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS	PREVIOUS WORK EXPEDRIENCE	SALARY	TRAVELLING/ OTHER ALLOWANCES
63	2013 January 03rd	Messenger/Cleaner (Temporary)	School Leaving Certificate	Secretary for three years, Store Clerk for two years	$3,852.00	
64	2013 January03rd	Messenger	I CXC	Self Employed for two years, Supervisor for three years .	$3,939.00	
65	2013 March 25th	Clerk I (Temporary)	5 CXC, Certificate in Microsoft Office, Diploma in Project Management	Office Manager for seven months, Administrative Assistant for one year, Manager's Assistant for three years	$4,353.00	
66	2013 May 13th	Clerk/Typist (Temporary)	8 CXC Passes, Associates in Business Executive	Delivery Operation for a year, Sales Representative for a year, Office Assistant for one year.	$4,353.00	
67	2013 October 07th	Clerk/Typist (Temporary)	Diploma Business Administration	Pharmacy Clerk Technician, Officer Manager/ Customer Service, Officer of Collections	$4,353.00	
68	2013 October 13th	Clerk 1 (Temporary)	7 CXC Passes	Office Assistant for two months, Cashier/ Food & Beverage Attendant for ten months, Assistant	$4,422.00	
69	2012 April, 30th	Human Resources Officer (On Contract)	Bachelor of Arts with Honours Business Management	Senior Human Resources Officer for two years, Human Resources Officer for six months and Human Resources Assistant for two years	$9,409.00	
	TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED DURING THE PERIOD - 69					
	TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS HIRED BUT NO LONGER IN THE EMPLOY OF THE BANK - 23					
	SUBMITTED BY:			Date:		

Agricultural Development Bank
(Vehicles utilized by the ADB)

2. Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds asked the hon. Minister of Food Production:

A. Would the Minister provide a list of the motor vehicles in the service of the staff of the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) and the registration numbers in each case?

B. Would the Minister further indicate whether these vehicles are owned by the ADB or leased?

C. If leased, would the Minister indicate who is/are the lessor(s), the monthly rent in each case, and whether it is the intention of the Bank to acquire these vehicles at the end of the lease period, if the lease agreements provide for the lessee's acquisition;

D. If such vehicles are leased, would the Minister indicate the total sum paid to each lessor for the period 1st July, 2010 to the present date?

The following reply was circulated to Members of the Senate:

The Minister of Food Production (Sen. The Hon. Devant Maharaj):

(a) List of motor vehicles in service of the staff of the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) and the registration numbers are as follows:

Vehicle	Registration
Toyota Fortuner	PCX 1281
Toyota Fortuner	PCX 3667
Toyota Hilux	TCX 6122
Nissan Urvan Panel Van	TCT 2023 PCT 2691 TCS 9716

(b) The following indicates the vehicles which are owned and those which are leased by the ADB:

Vehicle	Registration	Owned/Leased
Toyota Fortuner	PCX 1281	Owned by ADB
Toyota Fortuner	PCX 3667	Owned by ADB
Toyota Hilux	TCX 6122	Owned by ADB
Nissan Urvan Panel Van	TCT 2023	Leased
	PCT 2691	Leased
	TCS 9716	Leased

(c) The vehicles are leased from Ramkissoon's Auto Traders and Rental Limited, located at #39 Southern Main Road, Couva and, the Contract states that vehicles are to be returned to the Lessor at the end of the Lease.

(d) The total sum paid to the Lessor (Ramkissoon's Auto Traders and Rental Limited) from the 1st July 2010 to present is Three Million, Seven Hundred and Seventy-One Thousand, Two Hundred and Forty-Two dollars and Sixty Eight cents ($3,771,242.68).

Agricultural Development Bank
(Details of Assets)

3. **Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds** asked the hon. Minister of Food Production:

With respect to the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB), would the Minister inform the Senate of the following:

(a) the value of the total assets of the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB);

(b) whether all of its assets are insured;

(c) if the answer to (B) is negative, would the Minister say why not;

(d) would the Minister indicate who is/are the broker(s)/insurer(s) of the assets which are insured;

(e) how long has this broker/insurer provided this service and what is the cost of this service to the ADB to date; and

(f) what is the anticipated annual cost?

The following reply was circulated to Members of the Senate:

The Minister of Food Production (Sen. The Hon. Devant Maharaj):

(a) The value of total assets of the ADB is $622,944,000.00

(b) Yes all assets are insured.

(c) N/A

(d) the Brokers for the assets are:

(i) Comprehensive Insurance Brokers Limited

(ii) 21st Century Insurance and Reinsurance Brokers Limited

The Insurers for the assets are:

(i) Sagicor

(ii) Guardian General

(iii) COLFIRE

(iv) Reinsurance of Trinidad and Tobago Limited

(v) United Insurance Company Limited

(vi) NAGICO Insurance Trinidad and Tobago Limited

(vii) Lockton Companies LLP

(viii) New India Assurance

(e) The period of time in which the Broker/Insurer has provided this service is from November 2011 (Comprehensive Insurance Brokers Limited)—$720,908.46

November 2011 (21st Century Insurance & Reinsurance Brokers Limited)—$210,721.36

(f) The anticipated annual cost is $357,446.88

Agricultural Development Bank
(Details of Security Service)

4. **Sen. Fitzgerald Hinds** asked the hon. Minister of Food Production:

Would the Minister provide this Senate with a copy of the contract(s) of all the providers of security services to the ADB for the past five years?

The following reply was circulated to Members of the Senate:

The Minister of Food Production (Sen. The Hon. Devant Maharaj):

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
SECURITY SERVICES AGREEMENT

THIS AGREEMENT is made in duplicate the **30th** day of **August** in the year of Our Lord **Two Thousand and Ten** between **AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT BANK OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**, a body corporate incorporate under the Agricultural Development Bank Act Chapter 79:07 and having its principal place of business at No. 87 Henry Street, in the city of Port of Spain, in the Island of Trinidad (hereinafter referred to as "the Bank' which expression where the context so requires or admits shall include the person deriving title under the Bank) of the One Part and **PERSONNEL PROTECTION SERVICES LIMITED** a company duly incorporated under the laws of Trinidad and Tobago and having its registered office at #10 Macoya Road, Tunapuna (hereinafter referred to as "**the Contractor**") of the Other Part.

WHEREAS:-

A. The Bank is desirous of obtaining security services at its Head Office/North Branch in Port of Spain and at its branch offices at San Fernando, Sangre Grande, Chaguanas and Tobago.

B. The Contractor is a company formed for the purpose of operating security services in respect of premises throughout Trinidad and Tobago and has agreed with the Bank to maintain a security system for the Bank as hereinafter provided.

NOW THIS AGREEMENT WITHNESSETH as follows:

Definition and Interpretation

1. In this Agreement unless the context otherwise requires:
   i. The masculine gender shall include the feminine gender and vice versa.
   ii. The singular shall include the plural and vice versa, where appropriate.

iii. Clause headings are inserted for ease of reference only and are not to affect the interpretation of this Agreement.

2. In this Agreement unless the context otherwise requires:

"**Security Officer**" means the personnel as provided by the Contractor to carry out the Security Services as defined under this Agreement.

Duration of Agreement

3. This Agreement shall commence from the **30th August 2010** and shall, subject as hereinafter provided, remain in force for a period of **two (2) years** namely, until the **29th August 2012**.

Security Services

4. (a) The Contractor shall operate and maintain a twenty four (24) hour security system at the Bank's Head office and an nine (9) hour security system at its other offices in Trinidad and Tobago, (hereinafter together referred to as "**the said Premises**") described in the First Schedule hereto so long as the Bank shall continue to maintain such offices during the currency of this Agreement and such security system shall comprise of the security services and arrangements (hereinafter referred to as "**the Security Services"**) set out in the Second Schedule here to and be carried out in accordance with the Bank's safety, health and environmental guidelines (hereinafter referred to as "**the Safety, Health and Environment Guidelines**") set out in the Third Schedule hereto.

(b) If the Bank shall at any time during the subsistence of this Agreement cease to operate any of the said Premises as aforesaid, such office shall thenceforth be excluded from the security services being provided and this Agreement shall be deemed to be amended accordingly by mutual consent of the parties including the remuneration referred to in clause 5 hereinbelow but in all other respects the terms and conditions of this Agreement shall remain in full force and effect.

Payment

5. The Bank shall pay to the Contractor for the security services the following **annual** rates:

Head Office #87 Henry Street, Port of Spain	$372,048.00 (vat inclusive)

East Branch L.P. 917 Eastern Main Road Sangre Grande	$61,82400 (vat inclusive)
South Branch #7 Cipero Street, San Fernando	61,82400 (vat inclusive)$
Central Branch #29 Ramsaran Street, Chaguanas	61,82400 (vat inclusive)
Tobago Branch Unit 3B Campbell Building Burnett Street, Scarborough, Tobago	61,82400 (vat inclusive)

to be paid monthly seven (7) working days after the submission by the Contractor to the Bank of an invoice stating the work performed for such previous month.

Termination

6. This Agreement may be terminated at the end of the first or any subsequent year by either party giving to the other one (1) calendar month's notice in writing or by the Bank forthwith if the Contractor shall fail to comply with its obligations to carry out the security services herein, after receiving a written request from the Bank to do so and the Contractor shall have failed to comply therewith within twenty-four (24) hours of receipt of such writing or notice from the Bank.
7. Upon the determination of this agreement the Contractor shall be permitted to remove all its apparatus and equipment, if any, which may have been placed by it upon the said Premises.
8. If any monthly sum hereby agreed to be paid by the Bank to the Contractor after the same shall remain unpaid for a period of one month after the same shall become due, the Contractor may give to the Bank one (1) calendar month's notice in writing to terminate this agreement and unless such sum shall have been paid before the expiration of such notice this agreement shall upon such expiration terminate absolutely and the Contractor's obligations herein shall cease but without prejudice to the liability of the Bank in respect of such arrears due to the Contractors.

Security Conditions

9. The Contractor hereby undertakes and agrees with the Bank that throughout the duration of this agreement it will provide all the security services set out in the Second Schedule herein and adhere to the Safety, Health and Environment Guidelines.

Bank's Undertaking

10. The Bank hereby undertakes and agrees with the Contractor that throughout the duration of this agreement it will provide:-

    a. Telephone equipment for emergency calls and internal communications at the said Premises;
    b. Well functioning security equipment such as monitor screens;
    c. Appropriate signs and compound lighting;
    d. Fire, safety and emergency procedures;
    e. Accommodation for contractor's staff at the said Premises for access at all times to change rooms and toilet facilities; and
    f. Periodically take appropriate steps to educate and encourage staff co-operation, to support security efforts for effectiveness and efficiency.

Contractor's Undertaking

11. The Contractor hereby undertakes and agrees that it will maintain ongoing contact with the Bank's Employee Relations Unit staff to ensure that a high caliber of security service is maintained and that contractual obligations are fulfilled and will ensure that any deficiencies in the security services provided are corrected immediately when drawn to its attention by the Bank.

12. The Contractor hereby undertakes and agrees that it will ensure a high quality of security service by providing the Bank with security officers and ensure as follows:

    a. Qualified, honest, reliable, courteous and competent precepted security officers with recent police certificates and good character;

    b. That all Security Officers successfully complete medical examinations to the satisfaction of the Bank, prior to assuming duty at the Bank and will provide the Bank with medical certificates issues by a Registered Medical Officer attesting to such Officers good health;

c. That no security officer is deployed at the Bank to do work or any part thereof unless he has been adequately instructed and trained to the satisfaction of the Bank including the following:

i. Ensure confidentiality regarding the operations of the Bank to which security officers many become privy during the course of performing security services.

ii. Ensure that all Security Officers are trained not to discuss with any unauthorized person any aspect of the security services whether on or off duty and to avoid becoming too familiar with any member of the Bank's contractors, staff or other users of the Bank.

iii. Ensure that all Security Officers adhere strictly to the security policies of the Bank,

iv. Ensure that all Security Officers possess training in aggressive management and in the event that forceful action is required of the Security Officers to remove, arrest or detain person(s) that only the minimum amount of force is used without causing unnecessary public disturbance.

v. Ensure that all Security Officers equipped with firearms have firearms training (by selective officers of the Contractor) and that all Security Officers have training in first aid and plant safety courses such as fire drills.

13. The Contractor undertakes and agrees to have the underlisted to ensure capability of the security services required:-

a. Beepers;
b. Two way radios
c. Batons
d. Vehicles
e. Licensed revolvers
f. Efficient telephone contact service between the Bank the Contractor and its Security Officers.

14. The Contractor will ensure that all Security Officers carrying out the security services will be uniformed in well-laundered attire.

15. The Contractor undertakes and agrees to be solely responsible for all Security Officer's salaries, inclusive of all applicable taxes and insurances.

Indemnity by Contractor

16. The parties hereto further agree as follows:

a. That the Bank shall not be liable for any damages or compensation payable to any Security Officer for any bodily injury or death sustained in carrying out his duties under this Agreement and any such Liability shall be the sole responsibility of the Contractor who shall pursuant thereto:

i. Provide insurance in respect of Public Liability and Workmen's Compensation. The Contractor shall insure its' Security Officers, engaged in the performance of this Agreement, against injury or death in pursuance of this Agreement and the Contractor shall indemnify the Bank against all action, claims and demands in respect of such injury or death; and

ii. Provide insurance to cover any losses to the Bank and its staff or clients as a result of dishonest, fraudulent or negligent acts on the part of the Contractor's employees, servants/agents.

b. The Contractor shall be responsible for any losses to the Bank as a result of dishonest, fraudulent or negligent action on the part of the Contractor's Security Officers/employees/servants/agents.

c. The Contractor shall be liable for any damages or compensation payable to any customer/servants/agent of the Bank or their legal personal representative in respect to injury death or loss sustained by such customer/servant/agent resulting from the act, emission, default, or negligence of the Contractor's Security Officers/employees/servants and agents in the performance of this Agreement (save to the extent that such injury of loss resulted from any act or default of the customer/servant/agent of the Bank) and the Contractor shall keep; the Bank indemnified against such damages or compensation as aforesaid and against all other losses and claims for injury, death or damage which may arise in consequence of the negligent performance by the Contractor of this Agreement.

d. Any notice required to be given herein shall be sufficiently given to a Party hereto if sent by ordinary post or recorded delivery service to the registered office or main business address of the party. If sent by Post shall be deemed to have been delivered two (2) working days thereafter inclusive of the day of postage.

Mediation/Arbitration

17. (1) The Bank and the Contractor will attempt in good faith to resolve any dispute, difference, controversy or claim (hereinafter all referred to as **"the dispute"**) arising out of or relating to this Agreement promptly by negotiation between senior executives of the parties who have authority to settle the dispute (and who do not have direct responsibility for administration of the Agreement).

(2) The disputing Party shall give the other party written notice of the dispute. Within twenty (20) days after receipt of said notice, the receiving party shall submit to the other a written response. The notice and response shall include:

(a) a statement of each party's position and a summary of the evidence and arguments supporting its position, and;

(b) the name and title of the executive who will represent that Party. The executives shall meet at a mutually acceptable time and place within thirty (30) days of the date of the disputing party's notice and hereafter as often as they reasonably deem necessary to exchange relevant information and to attempt to resolve the dispute.

(3) If the dispute has not been resolved within sixty (60) days of the disputing party's notice, or if the party receiving said notice will not meet within thirty (30) days, either party may refer the dispute to the arbitration and final decision of a person to be agreed between the parties, or failing agreement within fourteen (14) days after either party has given to the other a written request to concur in the appointment of an Arbitrator, a person to act as such to be appointed on the requires of either party by the president or vice-president for the time being of the Law Association of Trinidad and Tobago.

(4) The Arbitrator shall, without prejudice to the generality of his powers under the Arbitration Act Chapter 5:01, have power to carry out and direct such investigations as may in his opinion be desirable in order to determine the rights of the parties and to ascertain and award any sum which ought to be paid to either of the parties and to determine all matters in dispute which shall be submitted to him.

(5) The award of such Arbitrator including any order for interest and costs shall be final and binding on the parties.

(6) All deadlines specified in this clause may be extended by mutual written agreement of the parties.

Performance Bond

18. The Contractor will be required on the commencement of this Agreement to make a Cash Performance Deposit or provide a Performance Bond of ten (10%) of the contract sum to be credited towards any losses or damages which may be incurred by the Bank due to the negligence of the Contractor's Security Officers and/or to remedy poor performance by the Contractor's Security Officers during the currency of the Agreement or any renewal thereof subject to the Bank's right aforesaid to retain the said ten percent (10%) contract sum, in whole or in part, such sum will be refundable to the Contractor at the end of the contract.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the Seal of the **Bank** has hereunto been affixed the day of …….. 2010 and the Seal of the **Contractor** has hereunto been affixed the say and year first hereinabove written.

THE FIRST SCHEDULE HEREINABOVE REFERRED TO:

OFFICE	LOCATION	NO. OF FLOORS	APPROXIMATE NO. OF EMPLOYEES
Head Office/ North Branch	No. 87 Henry Street, Port of Spain	4	69
East Branch	917 Eastern Main Road Sangre Grande	2	11
South Branch	No. 7 Cipero Street, San Fernando	2	15
Central Branch	No. 29 Ramsaran Street, Chaguanas	1	12
Tobago Branch	Unit 3B, Campbell Building, Burnett Street, Scarborough Tobago	1	8

THE SECOND SCHEDULE HEREIN ABOVE REFERRED TO

SCOPE OF WORK

A. Administrative & Screening Measures

1. Answering of the telephone in the absence of the Bank Receptionist during normal working hours, and after working hours, including weekends and Public Hsolidays (24 hours service).
2. To give access to the Bank to any approved bank personnel after normal working hours and accordingly to record their times of entering and exiting.
3. To ensure that all the Contractor's recording and filing requirements as required by the Bank are kept in an updated, neat and tidy manner.
4. Recording the movement of persons in and out of the premises.
5. To ensure that vendors are not allowed in any area of the Bank of transact business.
6. Maintaining accurate records of all incidents and /or reports of theft, loss or damage to property and report same to the Employee Relations Administrator of the Human Resources Department of the Bank.
7. To contact and/or make reports to protective services if an when the need arises.
8. To ensure the safe storage and use of the keys of the Bank's premises.
9. To maintain an appropriate system of accountability for the movement of keys and the issue and return of keys to authorized personnel.
10. To ensure that keys are not given and/or handed out to persons who are not so authorized.
11. Hoisting National and Bank's flags by 6:00 a.m. and removal of same by 6:00 p.m.
12. To provide direction to members of the public as required.
13. To handle varied entries to the Bank as detailed in the Bank's Safety, Health and Environmental Policy document.
14. To carry out searches of any person as required, that is, where there is a justifiable security reason, on any employees/customers/contractors, including any bags, handbags or other items in their possession.

B. Investigate

1. To conduct thorough investigations into all incidents and/or reports of theft, loss to Bank employees, visitors or damage to property.

2. Identify and report missing, damaged, defective or deficient equipment as well as utility wastage, building defects and safety hazards or unusual conditions that may affect lives of persons in the building.

3. To monitor the building environs and identity any potential problems.

4. Carrying out searches on employees/customers/contractors for any weapon or any other item in their possession where there is an apparent security risk.

C. Protective

1. To be on the alert at all times for the safety and protection of the Executive Management of the Bank.

2. Preventing visitors from entering unauthorized areas. When dealing with visitors/customers contact should be made with Bank employees and the person should not be sent to any work area unless advised by the employee.

3. Issuing visitor's badges to all visitors to the Bank. Which should be displayed on their person, except top dignitaries such as Ministers of Government.

4. Checking high-risk areas, such as plant and machinery installations and fire escape/emergency exits, for safety and control purposes.

5. Providing a fire watch and assisting in detecting safety hazards and utility wastage.

6. Securing of the Bank's premises as a whole.

7. To apprehend and detain any persons who are found to be creating a disturbance and/or carrying out unlawful damage to the Bank's property and to proceed lawfully with their apprehension and/or detention until determination of the matter by the police or Bank officer.

D. Preventative

1. Preventing unauthorized equipment and material from being brought into the Bank.

2. Preventing illegal removal of equipment and material and/or any items listed in the Bank's Register of Fixed Assets.

3. Ensuring that no assets, property or equipment are abused and/or mishandled in breach of the procedures established by the Bank.

4. Taking responsibility for evacuation of the Bank's population to safe predetermined points in the events of any emergency such as bomb scare and fire as detailed in the Safety, Health and Environment Policy Document.

E. Communication

1. To establish and maintain close liaison with the Police Department, Fire Services Department and Emergency Health Service (EHS) especially in the event of emergencies.

F. Supervision

The Bank will be monitored through the Contractor's supervision system. The Contractor's Supervisors shall make mobile visits to the Bank and carry out inspections to ensure:-

1. That the premises are intact;

2. That appropriate action is taken against any illegal/irregular activities;

3. That appropriate action is taken against potentially dangerous/hazardous situations on or in the immediate environs of the Bank;

4. That the Security Officers are alert at all times;

5. That the various security functions agreed to be carried out are effected in a vigilant manner;

6. That liaison is maintained regularly between the Contractors and the Bank's representatives via telephone calls and public relations type visits.

THE THIRD SCHEDULE HEREIN ABOVE REFERRED TO

Relevant excerpts from the **Bank's Safety, Health and Environment Document** to which Security Staff is to Adhere

A. Protocol for Normal Visitors to Premises

1. All visitors to the Bank's premises must check with Security or be referred on entering the Bank's premises.

2. Visitors must remain in the waiting area/lobby until they are approved for going to specific locations by security.

3. Each visitor will be issued a visitor's badge which should be displayed on them.

4. Vendors do not qualify as visitors and as such must not be allowed in any area of the Bank to transact business

B. Protocol for Staff use of Bank's Premises on Non-Business Days

1. As a general rule, no one except management personnel will be allowed access to the building on non-business days, after normal hours.

2. The Chief Executive Officer and Corporate Managers have access to the Bank's premises on a 24 hour basis.

3. Regular staff below the rank of Manager may only have access to the Bank's premises provided that the approved form provided has been shown to the security officer by the staff member duly signed by the right authority. This will not be applicable to Information Technology staff on a shift basis Mondays to Fridays.

C. Protocol for Handling of Other Individuals

Vagrant/ Insane Persons

In cases where vagrants/ insane persons enter the Bank, uniformed security officers should:

1. Keenly observe for weapons.

2. Use persuasion to leave (Manager/Supervisor from the Bank will give command to evict if necessary).

3. Use force to evict if necessary, where violence or threat of violence is obvious.

4. Be aware of sympathizers reaction.

5. Call external agency-police, ambulance (Bank's responsibility) but security should use discretion and do so if required. The Bank, however, should be informed.

6. Prepare report and forward to Human Resources Employee Relations Administrator

Aggrieved Customer

An aggrieved customer may be noisy, demanding or non-threatening. In circumstances like this:-

1. Try to determine the nature of the problem.

2. Try to pacify the customer and elicit the assistance of Bank employee(s) if necessary. Continuous observations by the security officer are necessary until such person is quieted or leaves the bank's promises.

3. Evict the person.

Person under attack who seeks refuge by coming into the Bank

1. Total involvement by security.

2. Shelter person from attacker by removing the other person to a safe area.

3. Call 999.

4. Restrain attacker by persuasion.

5. Use force if necessary.

6. Write report on matter documenting day, time, place, people involved, breakage, injuries, police involvement etc., and forward to Human Resources/Employee Relations Administrator.

Hostile Visitor to Employee

Visitor in this case refers to family, acquaintance or neighbor. Security would be required to:-

1. Intercept immediately.
2. Use persuasion to appeal to better judgment.
3. Evict if necessary using force.
4. Report matter to Human Resources/Employee Relations Administrator.

One Man Hold

1. If possible set off the hold up alarm.
2. Obey the robber's instructions but do not do more than required.
3. Try to avoid sudden movement or suspicious movement which could be interpreted by the robber as an act of aggression against him – remember he is probably in a very nervous state.
4. Without endangering yourself or anyone else, observe the robber to ascertain his method of escape, if by car, get a description and if possible the license number.
5. Note the direction he went.
6. As soon as possible, write down the robber's description without referring to any one else.
7. If the robber was barehanded, keep people away from the place where he stood and touched etc., that he handled and left behind. (The police will be interested in obtaining finger prints).
8. Close the Bank to the public.
9. Assess damages) (injury, death, breakage, removal of cash).
10. Notify the Corporate Manager Human Resources.

11. Notify the Police, call ambulance, and first aid group or any other necessary external agency.

12. Notify employees who witnessed scene that they may be required to talk to the police and of the possible need to identify the person/and testify in court matter.

13. Write report on matter to the Corporate Manager Human Resources.

Gang Hold Ups

The Persons involved often are professionals and may often be disguised, their faces may be covered. Their intentions are made clear the moment they enter. As detailed under "One Man Hold Up" one should:-

1. Concentrate on the gang member closet to you or the one you can see best so you can record an accurate description of him later, using the same sequence of examination of the person as we covered under the single man hold up.

2. Keep alert for anything that may happen, any names used by the men, accents, physical deformities, scars, marks etc. or peculiarities about any of them that may be useful to the authorities in their efforts to apprehend the criminal.

Employee Held as Hostage to get another employee

1. Remain calm/comply in accordance with procedure below.

2. Avoid sudden or suspicious moves that may excite kidnapper(s) but at the same time try to make known to other employees that a "panic" situation exists.

3. Indicate to the attacker that you must call the person first, as it is not normal to go to them unannounced.

4. Call person's office if you are allowed to do so.

5. Use distress language with tact.

6. Others in close proximity should call the police.

Capital Offence Cases
(Status of)

30. **Sen. Pennelope Beckles** asked the hon. Attorney General:

Could the Attorney General indicate the status of each capital offence case which is on appeal before the Court for the period 2010 to present?

The following reply was circulated to Members of the Senate:

The Attorney General (Sen. The Hon. Anand Ramlogan SC):

NOS.	PRIS. NOS	NAME OF INMATE	DATE OF CONVICTION	STATUS OF LOCAL APPEAL
1	94/2711/92	JAMES Wenceslaus	21 June 1996	Conviction Affirmed on 26/02/1997
2	154/3108/98	HARRIPERSAD Ramchan	2 November 1994	Conviction Affirmed on 24/02/2000
3	7/3184/02	JOHN Ronald	8 February 2006	Conviction Affirmed on 22/02/2007
4	67/2809/00	HERNANDEZ Neil	29 November 2004	Conviction Affirmed on 06/05/08
5	9/940/01	BROWN Nigel	7 February 2007	Conviction Affirmed on 07/02/12
6	16/4463/03	LEWIS Tabeel	20 March 2007	Conviction Affirmed on 10/05/2007
7	57/657/02	BENJAMIN Deenish	4 December 2006	Conviction Affirmed on 13/03/12

NOS.	PRIS. NOS	NAME OF INMATE	DATE OF CONVICTION	STATUS OF LOCAL APPEAL
8	56/2737/03	GANGA Deochan	4 December 2006	Conviction Affirmed on13/03/12
9	47/6054/01	PITMAN Lester	14 July 2004	Conviction Affirmed on 15/04/2005
10	51/1233/02	DANIEL Marcus	14 December 2005	Conviction Affirmed on 16/03/2007
11	2915831/01	TAITT Marlon	9 May 2008	Conviction Affirmed on
12	11/2713/02	LOPEZ Keron	2 March 2009	Conviction Affirmed on 20/04/11
13	01/5217/00	SOOKRAM Garvin	2 March 2009	Conviction Affirmed on 20/04/2011
14	49/4677/01	ABRAHAM David	28 July 2008	Conviction Affirmed on 26/02/2010
15	21/3267/02	HUNTE Timothy	31 March 2008	Conviction Affirmed on 26/02/2010
16	20/4727/03	KHAN Shazard	31 March 2008	Conviction Affirmed on 26/02/2010
17		RAMDEEN Julia	29 July 2008	Conviction Affirmed on 26/02/2010

NOS.	PRIS. NOS	NAME OF INMATE	DATE OF CONVICTION	STATUS OF LOCAL APPEAL
18	17/282/02	ROBINSON Stephen	13 March 2009	Conviction Affirmed on 29/07/2010
19	27/6028/01	AGARD Daniel	13 September	Local Appeal Pending
20	25/1921/05	BISSOON Darryl	6 October 2012	Local Appeal Pending
21	3/756/07	CARABALLO Nigel	31 January 2013	Local Appeal Pending
22	2/3334/01	KING Marlon	1 March 2012	Local Appeal Pending
23	65/590/05	MAPP Anderson	6 October 2012	Local Appeal Pending
24	19/693/04	VINCENT Sterlin	27 July 2012	Local Appeal Pending
25	25/6138/01	WILSON Gerard TB	31 May 2006	Local Appeal Pending – Last Court Appearance 10/11/09
26	40/1329/04	BRUCE Anton	12 October 2009	Local Appeal Pending
27	8/1616/05	BURRIS Kevin	2 May 2012	Local Appeal Pending
28	22/6000/01	CHANDLER Jay	17 August 2011	Local Appeal Pending
29	11/4008/99	CHANDRADATH Mukesh	12 October 2009	Local Appeal Pending

NOS.	PRIS. NOS	NAME OF INMATE	DATE OF CONVICTION	STATUS OF LOCAL APPEAL
30	26/3768/04	COHEN Anthony	July 31st 2013	Local Appeal Pending
31	6/5089/02	DONALD David	February 1st 2007	Local Appeal Pending
32	59/3873/01	DANIEL Richard	October 21st 2008	Local Appeal Pending
33	32/400/00	LOPEZ Stephen	May 23rd 2007	Local Appeal Pending

Agricultural Development Bank
(Details of Road Repairs)

38. **Sen. Pennelope Beckles** asked the hon. Minister of Food Production:

Could the Minister provide the Senate with the following:

(i) a list of all agricultural access roads which were rehabilitated/repaired for the period June 2010 to October 31, 2013 and the distance (in kilometers);

(ii) the cost to repair the said roads; and

(iii) the contractors awarded the abovementioned contracts and the value of same?

The following reply was circulated to Members of the Senate:

The Minister of Food Production (Sen. The Hon. Devant Maharaj):

Summary of Agricultural Access Roads (Rehabilitated and Maintained) June 2010- October 31st 2013

	No. of Roads	**Length of Roads (Kms)**	**Total Cost**	**Comments**
Rehabilitation				Funding –PSIP Procurement and Project Management - MOFP utilizing a CTS prequalified list of Contractors
2009/2010	4	4.56	7,269,773.81	
2010/2011	18	32.45	14,690,413.13	
2011/2012	19	40.45	14,335,719.80	
2012/2013	21	23.51	14,329,056.72	
2012/2013 IDF	26	38.07	38,289,511.98	Funding IDF Procurement - NIPDEC Project Management - MOFP
	88	**139.04**	**88,914,475.44**	

	No. of Roads	**Length of Roads (Kms)**	**Total Cost**	**Comments**
Maintenance				Funding- Recurrent and PSIP Procurement and Project Management – MOFP utilizing a CTB prequalified list of Contractors
2009/2010	37	60.22	20,380,246.52	
2010/2011	45	88.01	21,589,472.41	
2011/2012	41	112.2	22,854,143.58	
2012/2013	58	116.63	17,466,019.77	
2012/2013(Phase II) / 2013/2014 (Phase I)	28	30.98	18,086,592.74	Initializing in 2012/2013 to be completed in 2013/2014
	209	**408.04**	**100,376,475.02**	

List of Roads Rehabilitated and Maintained for the period 2010-2013

Rehabilitation

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2009-2010	Brazil Road	Wallerfield	Eastern Engineering and Marketing Services (1994) Ltd	0.76	1,729,015.92
	Adams Trace	Tamana	P.R Contracting Ltd	2.50	1,325,547.96
	Hamilton Trace Branch	Barrackpore	Jagmohan Enterprises Ltd	0.50	989,858.40
	Grant Trace	Penal	General Maintenance and Services Ltd	0.80	3,225,351.53
Sub Total	**4**			4.56	**7,269,773.81**

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2010-2011	Wallerfield Network	South Churchill Roosevelt Highway	Harilal Transport Services Limited	2.00	836,701.36
	Grant's Road Food Crop Project	Morne Diablo, Penal	Saiscon Limited	3.00	2,000,855.56
	New Bolt (Tabaquite)	Nariva Road, Tabaquite	Gowrie Persadsingh Contracting Co. Limited	1.60	1,214,153.07
	Esmeralda Food Crop Project	Cunupia	Kadhar Gajadhar	2.00	733,435.62
	Union Food Crop Project	Bristol Village, Mayaro	Universal Haulers	3.00	1,317,266.01
	Martin Trace	Carslen Field	Paras Singh General Contractors Limited	3.00	949,569.72

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2010-2011	Vega de Oropouche	Off Toco Main Road	V&S General Contractors Ltd	1.80	732,698.12
	Bamboo #1 Network	Bamboo, Valsayn	Gibraltar Consultants & Contractors Limited	1.50	609,439.05
	Cocoloco Road	Todds Road, Caparo	Harilal Transport Services Limited	1.50	694,869.56
	Lake Road	Mon Desir, Fyzabad	Ajay Enterprises Limited	1.60	702,770.75
	Mora Allotments	Off Toco Main Road	Paras Singh General Contractors Limited	2.00	773,395.70

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2010-2011	Mc Colly Trace	Vega De Oropouche	Paras Singh General Contractors Limited	0.89	639,042.58
	Dades Trace	Lp 216 Off Tabaquite Rio Claro Road	Universal Haulers Company Limited	1.34	463,344.20
	Missions Road	Piarco	D. Narine Contracting Services Ltd.	1.00	743,501.22
	Jerningham Food Crop Project	Marchin Road, Endeavor	Sat Sais Company Ltd	3.00	565,075.50
	Toolsie Trace	LP 306 Guatapajaro Road	L.R.S Ramcharan Hardware & Construction Company	0.68	297,945.45

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2010-2011	Matura Network	Off Sookoo Trace, Toco Main Road	Ajay Enterprises Limited	1.02	568,167.16
	La Compensation	Carapo	Amnesty Construction Limited	1.52	848,182.50
Sub Total	**18**			**32.45**	**14,690,413.13**

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2011-2012	Corial Extension	Princess Town	Sawh's Investment and Company Limited	1.50	755,837.50
	Princess Town Network	Corial, Princess Town	Roopnarine Mahabir and Sons	1.30	935,347.33
	Orange Grove West	Tacarigua	L.R.S Ramcharan Hardware & Construction Company	2.50	758,252.39
	Orange Grove East	Tacarigua	Sat Sais Company Ltd	2.50	758,620.50
	Waterloo Network North	Waterloo	RJB Building and Civil Engineering Contractor Ltd	1.50	850,839.00

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2011-2012	Exchange 1	Waterloo	Ajay Enterprises Ltd	2.00	818,138.75
	Felicity East	Felicity	Paras Singh General Contractors Ltd	3.00	642,303.75
	Felicity West	Felicity	D. Narine Contracting Services Limited	2.00	730,853.75
	Clarke Road	Talparo	Amnesty Construction Ltd	1.00	774,598.72
	Macoya East	Macoya	Carl Company Ltd	3.00	733,090.02

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2011-2012	Jerningham	Cunupia	Sat Sais Company Ltd	4.00	806,247.75
	Warren Network	Warrenville	RJB Building and Civil Engineering Contractor Ltd	3.00	757,418.75
	Caroni 2 Acre plots	Caroni	L.R.S Ramcharan Hardware & Construction Company	3.00	854,634.00
	Rahamut Extension	Debe	Roopnarine Mahabir and Sons	2.00	853,875.00
	Esmeralda	Cunupia	Ajay Enterprises Ltd	1.00	892,419.55

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2011-2012	Jattan Trace	Manzanilla	DH Technical Services Ltd	1.00	738,128.77
	Orange Grove Caroni 2 acre	Orange Grove	Sat Sais Co. Ltd	3.00	527,188.75
	Felicity Phase II	Felicity	Ajay Enterprises Ltd	3.00	815,230.52
	Mora Valley	Mora Valley	General Earth Movers	0.15	332,695.00
Sub Total	**19**			**40.45**	**14,335,719.80**

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2012-2013	Begesse Trace	LP 26 Off Riverside Road, Poole, Rio Claro	Saiscon Limited	1.4	788,474.50
	Rio Claro Food Crop project	LP 195 Old Guayaguayare Road	Harilal Transport Services Limited	1.4	766,620.36
	Mappa Farm Road	From Mappa Approach Road	L.R.S Ramcharan Hardware & Construction Company	0.85	765,957.50
	Warren Trace	Off Moruga Road LP 394/4	Annup Babwah Contractors	1.14	686,262.50
	Biran Trace	Tableland first Branch Road, Tableand	Annup Babwah Contractors	0.45	787,120.95

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2012-2013	Massey Lands Branch Trace Network	Lightbourne, Gasparillo	L.R.S Ramcharan Hardware & Construction Company	5.0	811,266.64
	Samaroo Road	Lightbourne Road, First road on left before bridge	Brendon West T/A West and Associates	0.6	688,160.00
	Sunreees Road	Off Scotts Road, Penal	Amnesty Construction Limited	1.5	911,169.38
	Jagroop Trace	Penal Rock Road	Ajay Enterprises Limited	1.35	867,062.63
	Pollard Trace	Penal Rock Road	Saison Limited	1.3	940,527.50

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2012-2013	***Erin Network***				
	Thomas Trace Road	Los Iros, Erin	Amnesty Construction Limited	0.5	974,147.41
	Off Anduez Road	Los Iros, Erin		0.43	
	Mohammed Trace	Carapal Village, Erin		0.60	
	Koosyal Road	Off Ravine Sable Road, Longdenville	Sawh's Investment and Company Limited	1.09	752,976.07
	Las Lomas Network				
	Savary Road	Las Lomas #1	Brendon West T/A West and Associates	2.0	755,913.40
	Hudda Trace	Las Lomas #3		0.3	
	Zorro Road	Lp 39 Off North Coast Road, Las Cuevas	KJS Enterprises Limited	0.3	904,696.38

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2012-2013	Ragoo Samaroo Trace	Aranguez South	Paharry Hardware & Construction Limited	1	771,650.00
	Hunte Trace	Off Oropouche (Fishing Pond) Main Road, Sangre Grande	Actril General Contractors Company Limited	1	768,487.50
	Gordon Miller #3	Off Oropouche MainRoad, Sangre Grande	Carl Company Limited	0.8	641,961.00
	Cumuto Network	Off Bramble Alexander Road, Cumuto	Sawh's Investment and Company Limited	0.5	746,603.00
Sub Total	**21**			**23.51**	**14,329,056.72**

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2012-2013	***Mayaro Network***		Fides Limited		4,725,371.50
	Killdeer Trace #2	Lp 34 of Killdeer Trace		1.40	
	Killdeer Branch Trace	Lp 26 of Killdeer Trace		0.40	
	Moorkey Trace	Riverside Road, Poole		0.95	
	Rampaul Trace	Main Road, Rio Claro		2.00	
	Ecclesyille Network				
	Dudley Beharry Road	Off Britto Trace, Brothers Road	Yenk's Contracting Services Ltd	1.00	2,298,125.50
	Rajpaul Trace	Off Legendre Road, Ecclesville		0.90	
	Marper Approach Road	St. Isadore Road, Plum Mitan	Fides Limited	1.40	2,731,641.00
	New Bolt Network & Landslip	Navet Road, Tabaquite	RCON Contractors Ltd	4.00	2,254,641.12
	Tableland Network				
	Buenos Aires Road	Mt. Stewart Village, Princess Town	Raj Transport and Equipment Rental	0.68	1,216,975.54
	Cotton Trace	Off Hart Trace, Corosan, Tableland		0.67	

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2012-2013	***Penal Network***		RCON Contractors Ltd		1,812,146.65
	Toby Trace Br #1	Toby Trace, Avocat		0.80	
	Road off Goodman Trace	Off Penal Road, Penal		0.60	
	Awardy Mega Farm Road	Off Friendship Road, Penal		0.70	
	Connector Road	Off Pierre Road, Chaguanas	Yenk's Contracting Services Ltd	5.80	3,644,060.68
	Mamoral Network		RJB Building and Civil Engineering Contractor Ltd		4,978,398.65
	Mamoral Valley Network - road	Mamoral		2.72	
	Mamoral Valley Network - br 1	Off Mamoral Valley Road		0.46	
	Mamoral Valley Network - br 2	Off Mamoral Valley Road		0.10	
	Banwarie Extension	Off Bancroft Road, Freeport	RCON Contractors Ltd	1.90	2,640.181.50

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2012-2013	***Hobal Network***	Maracas, St. Joseph	Raj Transport and Equipment Rental		2,907,893.45
	Hobal Trace			1.20	
	Hobal Trace Extension	Maracas St. Joseph		0.86	
	La Horquetta Network	Off De Freitas Boulevard, La Horquetta Workshop Road, El Carmen	RJB Building and Civil Engineering Contractor Ltd		3,401,929.08
	Haddaway Lands			1.53	
	El Carmen Seed Unit			3.00	
	Carapo Network	Off Chin Chin, LAS Lomas No. 1	RJB Building and Civil Engineering Contractor Ltd		3,204,126.09
	Upper Savary Road			2.86	
	Vialva Lane (Bridge)	Vialva Lane, Omeara Road, Carapo		0.20	

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2012-2013	***Jackson Network***		RJB Building and Civil Engineering Contractors Ltd		2,474,021.22
	Jackson Trace (Block A)	Erin Road, Buenos Aires		0.15	
	Well Road	Off Jackson Trace, Buenos Aires		1.79	
Sub Total	**26**			**38.07**	**38,289,511.98**

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Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2009-2010	Reid Trace	Maracas	R. Dwarika General Contracting Services Company Limited	0.57	809,049.73
	Maracas Bay Old Rd.	Maracas		0.53	
	Hamilton Trace	Approx. 420m along Mc Colly Trace		0.36	
	Dunderhill Road	Lopinot Road		1.14	
	Ramlal Trace	Cunupia	Sat Sais Company Ltd	0.96	1,933,334.92
	Mon Plasir Trace	St. Helena		2.61	
	Sumaria Trace West	Biche		3.8	
	Martin Trace	Carlsen Field		1.8	
	Bancroft Road	Freeport	Premium Maintenance and Repairs Co. Ltd	2.19	2,385,739.40
	La Quesa Road	Freeport		2.17	
	Fernando Trace	Cunupia		1.03	
	Christian Trace	Freeport		1.45	

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2009-2010	Sellier Road	Waller Field	VB Enterprises Ltd	2.75	1,146,146.92
	Ganteaume Trace	Guaico		2.34	
	Gunness Trace	Cumuto		1.83	
	Flemming Road	Fishing Pond Road		2.8	
	Oropouche Road	Valencia		2.9	
	Boundialsingh Trace	Cumuto		0.35	
	Mahabalsingh Trace	Cunapo	R. Mahabir and Sons	1.05	1,219,516.93
	North Boundary Trace	Ecclesville		1.52	
	Pond Road	Ecclesville		1.3	
	Old Rio Claro Mayaro Road	Ecclesville	R. Dwarika General Contracting Services Company Limited	2.7	471,685.38
	Rampersad Trace	Mayaro		1.4	

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2009-2010	Tableland Branch Road #1	Along Tableland Local Road No.1	VB Enterprises Ltd	1.01	1,404,591.88
	Tableland Branch Road #2	Along Tableland Local Road No.1		1.57	
	Perry Road	Off Tableland Branch Road #1		2.85	
	Rahamut Trace	Penal	Scalex Construction Company Limited	2.67	1,158,885.48
	Road #1 Off Rahamut Trace	Penal		0.06	
	Road #1 Off Rahamut Trace	Penal		0.42	
	Samlalsingh Trace	Bonne Aventure		0.96	
	Perry Caratal Trace	Bonne Aventure		0.5	
	Allarack Trace	Bonne Aventure	Saiscon Limited	0.94	884,235.00
	Dheeraji Branch Trace	Tableland	D. Narine Contracting Services Ltd	1.3	802,211.13
	Corial Road	Princess Town		0.94	

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2009-2010	La Fortune Trace (Phase 1)	Jean Moruga	D. Narine Contracting Services Ltd	4.66	7,479,238.49
	La Fortune Trace (Phase 2)	Jean Moruga		1.48	
	Los Armadillos	Off Guaico Tamana Road	Dipcon Engineering Services Ltd	1.31	685,611.26
Sub Total	**37**			**60.22**	**20,380,246.52**

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2010-2011	Plum Mitan 1	Caltoo Trace	Big Thumb Enterprises Limited	5.2	1,129,240.20
	Aranjuez Network 1	Aranguez North	Carl Company Limited	4	1,538,480.35
	La Compensation Road Works	Carapo	Amnesty Construction	3.3	1,543,932.50
	Lightbourne Network				
	Allarack Road (Erosion Control)	Forest Park	Ajay Enterprises Limited	0.0	1,378,597.00
	Perry Road	Lightbourne, Gasparillo		0.8	
	Samlalsingh Trace	Lightbourne, Gasparillo		2	

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2010-2011	***Nariva/Mayaro Network***		V.B Enterprises Limited		929,572.60
	Charuma Trace	LP No.258 Biche		3	
	Abass Trace	Off Marcano Trace, Biche		1.18	
	Euroze Trace	Off Cunapo Southern Road, Biche		0.86	
	Prudence Trace Ext.	Off O'Brien, Biche		0.92	
	Tableland Network 1		V.B Enterprises Limited		880,828.36
	Dheerajee Trace	LP 629 Off Naparima/ Mayaro Road		1.11	
	Mc Sween Trace	LP 552 Off Naparima/ Mayaro Road		1.4	

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2010-2011	***Tableland Network 2***				
	Tableland Br. Trace #2	Off Tableland Local Road	Big Thumb Enterprises Limited	1.5	670,386.75
	Mendoza Trace	Off Perry Road, Tableland		0.8	
	Depot Road	Depot Road. Londonville	General Maintenance & Services Ltd	3	732,498.25
	Las Lomas Network	Las Lomas	B. Jagmohan General Contractors Ltd	4	754,066.50
	Alcindor Road	Balandra	Carl Company Ltd	1.85	656,667.83
	Naranjo Road	Off Mamoral Road	Kadar Gajadhar	2.8	910,263.64
	Leekham Network				
	Leekham Road	Off Mamoral Road	Katmar Contractor	2.25	612,829.25
	Enoch Trace (Bridge Repairs)	Off Mamoral Road		0.0	

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2010-2011	***Macoya Network***				
	Macoya South	Macoya	Motilal Moonan Engineering and Construction Limited	3	484,109.18
	Bamboo # 2	Macoya		2	
	Maloney Network	Maloney	Actril General Contractors Company Limited	4.5	617,446.50
	Carlsen Field Network	Carlsen Field South	Jagmohan Enterprises Limited	1	760,682.45
	Platanite Network	Off St. Julien Road, Barrackpore	D. Narine Contracting Services Ltd	4	714,086.18
	Hamilton Link Road	Off Cumuto South Trace, Barrackpore	Saiscon Limited	1	427,323.33
	Caroni Pump Road	Off Caroni North Bank Road, Kelly Village	Namalco Construction Services Ltd	0.9	220,489.50
	Mc Nair	Off Chin Chin Road, Cunupia	Motilal Ramhit and Sons Contracting Ltd	5	707,977.49

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2010-2011	Melajo Road	Vega De Oropouche	Eastern Engineering (1994) & Marketing Services Limited	1.8	394,661.03
	Mora Allotments	Oropouche	Universal Haulers Company Ltd	2.1	530,553.65
	Maloney Network	Maloney	D. Narine Contracting Services Ltd	1.65	479,688.00
	Lake Road	Off Naranjit Road	Scalex Construction Company Limited	1.25	375,009.25
	Cocoloco Road	Off Todd's Station Road, Caparo	Roopnarine Mahabir & Sons	1.5	417,450.00
	Bamboo #1 Network	Valsayn	Jagmohan Enterprises Limited	1.51	356,767.95
	Rahamut Network	Off Rahumut Trace	Paras Singh General Contractors Limited	2	588,225.00
	Dheeraji Trace	Tableland	Big Thumb Enterprises Ltd	0.84	494,488.50
	Pine Bush Trace & Mt. Moriah Trace (Culverts)	Cunupia	Eastern Engineering (1994)& Marketing Services Limited	0.0	132,825.00

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2010-2011	Samara Trace	Las Lomas	MK Civil Limited	1.03	230,230.00
	Esmeralda Network	Cunupia	RJB Building & Civil Engineering Contractor Ltd	1.5	239,085.00
	Grant Trace	Morne Diablo, Penal	Ajay Enterprises Limited	3	274,505.00
	La Compensation	Carapo	Amnesty Construction Ltd	3.3	442,307.25
	Martin Trace	Carslen Field	RJB Building & Civil Engineering Contractor Ltd	1.7	243,868.70
	New Bolt	Tabaquite	Roopnarine Mahabir & Sons	1.5	247,940.00
	Rodney Road	Off Arena Road, Freeport	Haniff Mohammed and Sons	0.16	98,582.72
	Union Road	Rio Claro	Haniff Mohammed and Sons	1.8	373,807.50
Sub Total	**45**			**88.01**	**21,589,472.41**

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2011-2012	***Bon Air Network***				
	Bon Air	Bon Air	General Earth Movers	3.0	523,545.55
	La Grinde	Maracas St. Joseph		2.0	
	Cabbage Drive	Orange Grove, Tacarigua	Actril General Contractors Co. Ltd	2.5	683,277.10
	Bamboo Network	Bamboo #1, Valsayn	Gibraltar Consultants & Contractors Ltd	2	510,364.25
	Piarco Network	Piarco	Haniff Mohammed and Sons	2	449,802.38
	Macoya Network	Macoya, Pasea	Paharry Hardware & Construction Ltd	3	600,875.00
	Maloney Bridge Repairs	Maloney	Gowrie Persadsingh Contracting Co. Ltd	5	441,738.00
	Brazil Network				
	Brazil Lome Network	Off Brazil Main Road	MK Civil Ltd	3.77	911,266.79
	Brazil Arena Road	Off Arena Road, San Raphael		1.76	

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2011-2012	***Cumuto Network***				
	Howsen Trace	Off Cumuto Main Road	Carl Company Ltd	0.52	704,989.76
	Toolsie Trace	Guatapajaro Road		0.68	
	Sookoo Trace	Off Guatapajaro Road		1.46	
	Mazanilla Network	Off Nariva Road, Manzanilla	D. Narine Contracting Services Ltd	2.34	795,669.19
	Kowlessar Trace	Off Eastern Main Road, Coalmine		1.96	
	Carlsen Field Network	Carlsen Field	MK Civil Ltd	5	892,584.00
	Platanite Project	Penal	ATMAA Construction Services	4	877,657.00
	Puzzle Island Network	Debe	RBMR Construction Co. Ltd	6	885,373.50
	Rasta Trace	Moruga	Sonogo Construction Co. Ltd	1.3	791,004.50
	Hope Trace	Princess Town	Sawh's Investment Co. Ltd	1	748,146.30
	Cedar Hill	Princess Town	Paras Singh General Contractors Ltd.	2.5	778,607.50

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2011-2012	Pond Road	Ecclesville	Harilal Transport Services	1.5	404,015.70
	La Compensation (Drainage Works)	Arima	Saiscon Limited	3.5	592,020.00
	San Raphael Network				
	Esperanza Trace	Off Caroni South Bank Road	General Earth Movers	1.57	788,173.43
	La Trinidad Estate	San Raphael Junction		1.74	
	San-Juan Estate	Mammoral	Amnesty Construction Limited	2	825,273.35
	Pumpkin Drive	Orange Grove, Tacarigua	ATMAA Construction Services	1.5	589,945.40
	Plum-Mitan Blk IV	Plum-Mitan	RBMR Construction Co. Ltd	3.6	737,748.00
	Ramdeen Trace West	Penal	Gibraltar Consultants & Contractors Ltd	2	196,897.25
	Jerningham Phase 1	Cunupia	Actril General Contractors Co. Ltd	4	834,495.20
	Puzzle island	Debe	B. Jagmohan General Contractors Ltd	1.5	813,445.60

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2011-2012	Aranjuez North	Aranjeuz	Sat Sais Company Ltd	1	687,148.00
	Mitchell Trace	Talparo	Roopnarine Mahabir & Sons	1	144,463.00
	Esperanza Extension	San Raphael	Amnesty Construction Limited	1.5	466,785.00
	Princes Town Network	Princes Town	Paras Singh General Contractors Ltd	3	621,273.12
	Orange Grove 2 acre	Orange Grove	Paras Singh General Contractors Ltd	4	453,376.00
	Orange Grove East	Orange Grove	B. Jagmohan General Contractors Ltd	4	643,632.00
	Felicity West	Felicity	D. Narine Contracting Services Ltd	4	889,059.71
	Felicity East	Felicity	L.R.S Ramcharan Hardware & Construction Co. Ltd	4	775,824.50
	Warren Network	Caroni	RJB Building & Civil Engineering Contractor Ltd.	5	664,125.00
	Jerningham	Cunupia	RJB Building & Civil Engineering Contractor Ltd.	4	497,777.50

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
	Felicity	Felicity	R.B.M.R Construction Co. Ltd	6	633,765.00
Sub Total	**41**			**112.2**	**22,854,143.58**

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2012-2013 Phase 1	***Aranguez Network***				
	New Dawn Road	Aranguez	Paharry Hardware and Construction Ltd	0.30	546,986.00
	Sunrise Extension West			0.30	
	Rambhaju Extension			0.60	
	All Drive			0.60	
	Bamboo Grove			0.80	
	Wallerfield Network				
	Sellier Road	Wallerfield	Scalex Construction Co. Ltd	2.76	726,180.84
	Mexico Road			0.80	
	Brazil Road			1.5	
	Murray Trace			1	
	La Felicidad Road	Four Roads, Tamana	Paras Singh General Contractors Ltd.	2	823,515.00
	Xeres Road	Off Connector Road, Carlsen Field	General Maintenance & Services Ltd.	1.4	643,379.00

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2012-2013 Phase 1	Milk Depot Road	Off Connector Road, Carlsen Field	Ajay Enterprises	1	777,975.00
	Mc Nair Network	Off Chin Chin Road, Cunupia	MK Civil Ltd	7.8	820,023.60
	Mt. Moriah Road	Off Welcome Road, Cunupia	V&S General Contractors Ltd	3	787,664.90
	Workshop and Centeno Livestock Station Approach Road	El Carmen	General Maintenance & Services Ltd.	1.4	699,545.00
	Cumuto Network				
	Bedes Buxo Road	Bon Air Road, Coryal	Paharry Hardware and Construction Ltd	2.7	920,147.40
	Gunness Trace	Little Cora Road, Cumuto		1.83	
	San Antonio Trace	Off Cumuto Main Road		2.4	
	Sin Verguenza Road	Off St. Marie Emmanuel Road, Cumuto		3.7	

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2012-2013 Phase 1	***Manzanillo Network***				
	Anthony Trace	Off Manzanilla Main Road	Universal Haulers Company Limited	1.7	940,464.25
	El Recuerdo Land Settlement			2.4	
	Morin Bay Road			2.5	
	Gantaume Trace	Off Guico Tamana Road, Nestor Village	Ajay Enterprises Ltd	4	772,156.00
	Cushe Food Crop Project	Off Biche Main Road, Cushe Village	VB Enterprises Ltd	3.5	894,260.13
	Cushe Network				
	Cushe Trace	Off Biche Main Road	Gowrie Persadsingh Contracting Co. Ltd	1.24	828,499.10
	Cushe Trace Food Crop Project #2	Off Biche Main Road, Cushe Village		1.88	

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2012-2013 Phase 1	***Pinder Network*** Pinder Approach Road	Off Darks Trace, Naparima Mayaro Road, Poole	ATMAA Construction Services	1.03	659,937.85
	Pinder Road #2			0.84	
	Pinder Road #3			0.52	
	Pinder Road #4			0.94	
	Pinder Road #5			1.41	
	Rio Claro Network Killdeer Trace	Off Tabaquite Rio Claro Road	Paras Singh General Contractors Ltd	0.98	826,588.95
	North Boundary Trace	Ecclesville		1.46	
	Tableland Branch Trace	Off Tableland Local Road		1.5	
	Tableland Branch Trace #2	Off Tableland Branch Trace		1.5	
	Dheerajee Trace	Off Naparima Mayaro Road		1.1	

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2012-2013 Phase 1	***Cunjal Network***				
	Cunjal Road	Barrackpore	ATMAA Construction Services	5	680,696.50
	Platanite Road			4	
	Erin Network				
	BP Coora Road	Off Penal Quinam Road, Siparia		3	
	Anduez Trace	Off Los Iros Road, Los Iros	Scalex Construction Co. Ltd	2	801,693.75
	Austin Coromandel Road	Off Southern Main Road, Granville		2.2	
	Penal Network				
	Congo Bunsee Trace	Off Bunsee Trace, Road Road, Penal		1	
	Congo Trace off Rock Road	Off Rock Road, Penal	D. Narine Contracting Services Ltd	2.5	760,265.00
	Jagroop Trace	Off Rock Road, Penal		2	
	Poodai Lagoon Food Crop Project	Off Ramsingh Trace, Roachard Road, Penal		2	

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2012-2013 Phase 1	La Fortune Food Crop Project	Moruga	Sonogo Construction Co. Ltd	6	593,285.00
	Phillip Trace	Moruga	VB Enterprises Ltd	2	646,794.50
	Gasparillo Network Corial Road #2	Naparima Mayaro Road	Sonogo Construction Co. Ltd	6.12	735,445.70
	Harnanan Trace	Gasparillo		1	
	Perry Trace	Gasparillo		1	
	Samlalsingh Trace	Gasparillo		2.07	
	Tabaquite Network Guanapourie Road Trace	Brasso Road,Tabaquite	Gowrie Persadsingh Contracting Co. Ltd	0.3	733,636.75
	John Williams Trace #1	Telemaque Hill Road, Brasso		1.70	
	John Williams Trace #2	Tabaquite		1.35	
	Mc Carthy Trace	Telemaque Road,		0.9	

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2012-2013 Phase 1	***Freeport Food Crop Project*** Christian Trace	Arena Road, Freeport	MK Civil Ltd.	1.4	846,879.55
	Rodney Road			1.7	
	Rixon Trace			3	
Sub Total	**58**			**116.63**	**17,466,019.77**

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2012-2013 Phase 2/ 2013-2014 Phase 1	Sunrees/Snail Trace	Scott's Road, Penal	Kall Company Ltd	1.7	818,239.95
	Rahamut Trace	Connects Debe Truck Road to Pluck Road	Amnesty Construction Ltd	3.0	714,725.00
	Tulsa Branch Trace Network Tulsa Branch Trace No.3	Corner of Tulsa and Gayah Trace	Harilal Transport Services Limited	1.1	818,929.38
	Tulsa Branch Trace No.2	Off Gopie Trace		1	
	Sukal Branch Trace	Off Sukai Trace, Pluck Road		0.55	
	Rostant Road	Brasso Caparo Main Road	Annup Babwah Contractors	2.5	841 225.00
	Brazil Arena Road & Pump House Trace		Sawh's Investment Co. Limited	1.32	826,860.93

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2012-2013 Phase 2/ 2013-2014 Phase 1	***Manoo Trace Network*** Manoo Trace	Off Bon Air Road, Cumuto	Gillis Construction Co. Limited	0.8	931,869.84
	Ettienne Trace	Off Mandillion Road, Sangre Grande		0.45	
	Walters Trace	Along Howsen Trace		0.26	
	Tewarie Trace Network Tewarie Trace	Off Arena road, Freeport	L.R.S Ramcharan Hardware & Construction Company Ltd	0.80	971,654.09
	Reform Estate Road	LP #6 Reform Road		0.28	
	Orange Grove (Riverside)	Orange Grove South	Actril General Contractors Co. Ltd	1.40	805,266.11
	Juan Lopez Trace	LP 488 Talparo Main Rd., Mundo Nuevo	Gillis Construction Co. Limited	1.30	726,841.17
	Talparo Trace	LP 308 Talparo Main Rd., Mundo Nuevo	Actril General Contractors Co. Ltd	0.67	914,000.45

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2012-2013 Phase 2/ 2013-2014 Phase 1	Leotaud Trace	LP 10 Phillips Trace , Off Talparo Main Road	Sawh's Investment Co. Limited	1.73	816,167.88
	Block 3 East, Wallerfield	Off Demerara Heights, Wallerfield	Kall Company Ltd	1.00	853,900.30
	Block 3 West, Wallerfield	Off Moonan Rd, Wallerfield	AR General Construction Co. Limited	0.92	890,370.25
	Block 5, Wallerfield	Off North- South Rd, West of Block 3	AR General Construction Co. Limited	1.85	820,798.52
	John Mark Road	Off Caratal #2, Lightbourne Road	Amnesty Construction Ltd	1.30	859,281.61
	Sahadath Trace	LP A15 off Caratal Road	Annup Babwah Contractors	0.27	427,936.85

Year	Road Name	Location	Contractor Awarded	Length (km)	Cost
2012-2013 Phase 2/ 2013-2014 Phase 1	***Oropouche River Road Network*** Road Off Oropouche River Road	G.P Road, Barrackpore	Ajay Enterprises Ltd	1.3	875,633.00
	Suzanna Trace	Iere Village, Princes Town		0.5	
	Sou Sou Lands/ Carlsen Field URP Social Project	Off Connector Road, Carlsen Field	Carl Company Ltd	1.00	766,485.01
	Road off Bunsee Trace	Penal Rock Road	B. Jagmohan General Contractors Limited	1.10	847 613.25
	Orange Grove Network (East)	Orange Grove South	Carl Company Ltd	0.88	732,965.29
	Adjodha Trace	Off Las Lomas #1 Road	Ajay Enterprises Ltd	1.00	848,815.00
	Sas Sas Trace	Off San Carlos Road, San Raphael	L.R.S Ramcharan Hardware & Construction Company Ltd	1.00	977 013.86
Sub Total	**28**			**30.98**	**18,086,592.74**