

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, March 25, 2022*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have received communication from Dr. Roodal Moonilal, MP, Member for Oropouche East, and Mr. Arnold Ram, MP, Member for Caroni Central, who have requested leave of absence from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

**PETITION****Trinidad and Tobago Netball Association**

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you very kindly, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Member for Tobago West, I beg to present a petition on behalf of the Trinidad and Tobago Netball Association.

I move that the Clerk be allowed to read the petition. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*Question put and agreed.**Petition read.**Question put and agreed to:* That the petitioners be granted leave to proceed.**PAPERS LAID**

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Public Transport Service Corporation for the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> September 2018. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert)*]

**UNREVISED**

*To be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.*

2. Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Public Administration to the First Report of the Joint Select Committee on Finance and Legal Affairs on an inquiry into the Ease of Doing Business in Trinidad and Tobago, First Session (2020/2021), Twelfth Parliament. [*The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis)*]
3. Family Proceedings (Amendment) (No. 2) Rules, 2022. [*Hon. C. Robinson-Regis*]
4. Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Rules, 2022. [*Hon. C. Robinson-Regis*]
5. Civil Proceedings (Amendment) (No.2) Rules, 2022. [*Hon. C. Robinson-Regis*]
6. Children Court (Amendment) Rules, 2022. [*Hon. C. Robinson-Regis*]
7. Annual Report on the Freedom of Information Act, Chap. 22:02 for the year 2009. [*The Minister of Communications and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Symon de Nobriga)*]
8. Annual Report on the Freedom of Information Act, Chap. 22:02 for the year 2010. [*Hon. S. de Nobriga*]
9. Annual Report on the Freedom of Information Act, Chap. 22:02 for the year 2016. [*Hon. S. de Nobriga*]
10. Annual Report on the Freedom of Information Act, Chap. 22:02 for the year 2017. [*Hon. S. de Nobriga*]
11. Annual Report on the Freedom of Information Act, Chap. 22:02 for the year 2018. [*Hon. S. de Nobriga*]

### **ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**Madam Speaker:** Leader of the House.

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-**

**Regis):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, there are 25 questions for oral answer and we will be answering 24. We are asking for a two-week deferral for Question No. 128. There are no questions for written response.

### **ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

*The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh (Couva South):*

#### **Caroni (1975) Employees (Details of Receipt of Leases)**

**128.** Could the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries state:

In light of the recent protest action by former employees of Caroni (1975) Limited, will the Minister state how many former employees are yet to receive their residential and agricultural leases?

*Question by leave, deferred.*

#### **Bridge at Hercules Trace, Ravine Sable (Commencement of Works)**

**112. Dr. Rishad Seecheran (Caroni East)** asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Will the Minister inform the House when remedial works will commence on the bridge located at Hercules Trace, Ravine Sable?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Works and Transport.

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the bridge at Hercules Trace, Ravine Sable, falls under the purview of the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation and not the Ministry of Works and Transport. However, the Ministry of Works and Transport as usual is willing to provide the corporation with any technical assistance that may be required. To date I am informed that no assistance

has been asked for by the corporation.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Seecheran:** Thank you, Minister. Will the Minister indicate if a Bailey bridge can be used to restore this water crossing for the villagers in Ravine Sable?

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I think from the response that supplemental does not arise.

**Supermarket Association of Trinidad and Tobago  
(Consideration of Automated System Request)**

**113. Ms. Vandana Mohit** (*Chaguanas East*) asked the hon. Minister of Social Development and Family Services:

Will the Minister state whether the request of the Supermarket Association of Trinidad and Tobago for an automated system for government assistance will be considered?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Social Development and Family Services.

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Social Development and Family Services, the Ministry has not received a formal request from the Supermarket Association of Trinidad and Tobago with respect to this matter and has indicated that it is currently finalizing a proposal for the consideration of the Ministry, and that proposal is to come from the Supermarket Association. In the meantime, the Ministry is actively engaged in building its digital systems which include modernized payment mechanisms to better serve its clients and key stakeholders, with particular focus on facilitating cashless transactions for the unbanked. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Complementing in-person Classes with Online Sessions  
(Measures to assist Schools)**

**114. Ms. Anita Haynes** (*Tabaquite*) asked the hon. Minister of Education:

Will the Minister indicate what measures have been implemented to assist schools that are unable to complement in-person classes with online sessions?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Education.

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the return of our Forms 1 to 6 students to face-to-face school instruction is indeed critical for students' success in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Though synchronous online delivery of the curriculum was no longer mandatory for some students, asynchronous online instruction continued as required for all students. To this end, Madam Speaker, schools were mandated to prepare and disseminate content, lessons and assignments for students who are either rostered to be at home or for revision.

Learning activities for all subject areas, for both the primary and secondary schools curricula, were made available via the Ministry's School Learning Management System and online workshops were conducted for technical-vocational teachers and tech-ed teachers and platforms were developed for teachers to collaborate on strategies for the delivery of curricula material for use in in-person instructional learning, assignments and assessment packages to distribute for students use at home. Additionally, Madam Speaker, the Ministry continues to provide instruction to students via its dedicated television stations with approximately 263 lessons that are broadcast to students.

The Ministry has engaged Digi-Data for the ICT upgrade of 134 secondary schools towards school-wide Internet area access for educational technology integration and that process is ongoing. The Ministry procured 10,000 MiFi devices and distributed same to both students and teachers as well as schools, and as such, Madam Speaker, the Ministry continues to ensure that all of our students

have, as far as possible, equitable access to synchronous as well as asynchronous instruction.

[*Device emits sound*]

**Madam Speaker:** I believe somebody's device—and I would ask the person if they could leave the Chamber and take that device off, please.

**Mr. Young:** [*Inaudible*]

**Hon. Members:** [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Speaker:** Well, I would ask the Marshal to confiscate that device since it has no owner.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

### **Rotation of in-person Classes (Monitoring and Evaluation Protocols for)**

**115. Ms. Anita Haynes** (*Tabaquite*) asked the hon. Minister of Education:

Will the Minister indicate what monitoring and evaluation protocols are in place to evaluate the performance of schools with the rotation of in-person classes?

**Hon. Members:** [*Laughter*] [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. So could we have some order and continue with the business of the people? Minister of Education.

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Education has in place a fully established and operational monitoring and evaluation system for schools that is implemented through the school supervision, curriculum and planning, and Student Support Services Division. Each school has an assigned line supervisor whose major function is to monitor, evaluate and guide administrators in school operations, inclusive of timetabling and rostering of classes and teachers. School supervisors visit schools individually or in teams to assess school operations

utilizing a standardized school-based management assessment tool.

In addition, curriculum officers have developed tools to assess the performance of teachers and through the implementation of clinical supervision they visit schools and discuss strategies with heads of department to maintain or improve student and teacher performance as necessary. In addition, heads of department and teachers would have received extensive training in the implementation of clinical supervision and utilizing reporting instruments which are monitored and evaluated by the relevant curriculum officers. Guidance officers and school social workers are also available to guide students in transitioning back to in-person instruction.

Subject and form teachers utilize the deferral system for students who are exhibiting psychosocial learning or transitioning challenges. They too, Madam Speaker, utilize well-developed assessment instruments and intervention strategies. Moreover, Madam Speaker, each district has a district leadership team which comprises members of the three divisions. They are mandated to meet on a weekly basis to discuss issues such as school management, school performance and student performance with an aim to develop remedial and intervention strategies which have to be developed as a team and implemented for schools in need. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Ms. Haynes:** Yeah. Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is a supplemental: Given the work that is being done in M&E, are there any reports that can be made available to be public so that we could see the work of the evaluation team?

**Hon. Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly:** Madam Speaker, it would depend on what reports are—what specific information is being requested or required.

**Ms. Haynes:** So what I am asking is that, there is a monitoring and evaluation

system so, are there any reports that can be made available to the public from this team?

**Hon. Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly:** [*Inaudible*]

**Madam Speaker:** Well, I believe the question was answered. The Minister said it depends on what report, so maybe if you want to ask a supplemental maybe you should identify and I will allow that, but I will not allow the same question repeatedly.

**Ms. Haynes:** So, reports on the performance of schools with the rotation of classes, reports like that.

**Hon. Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly:** Madam Speaker, once again, it depends on what are you speaking about when you speak to performance. There is attendance; there is student performance and diagnostic testing, so it would have to be specific as to what you are looking for and that data could be supplied.

**Ms. Haynes:** [*Inaudible*] —so all aspects, is there any overall report on performance?

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. So, Member, I think from the first two supplemental—answers to first two supplemental questions, I get the sense that your question is too general so if you wish to ask a third supplemental question, which you are entitled to, I think it should be a different question, if I am going to allow it.

**Ms. Haynes:** I think the next question would get me closer to the report.

**Madam Speaker:** Okay.

### **Adjustment to School Curriculum (Details of)**

**116. Ms. Anita Haynes** (*Tabaquite*) asked the hon. Minister of Education:

Will the Minister indicate whether there has been any adjustment to the curriculum to ensure complete delivery within the school year?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Education:



**The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the development of a subject syllabus is based upon key competencies, concepts and core knowledge suitable for a particular developmental level, whereas a curriculum is a guide for teachers and educational institutions on the expected student learning outcomes for a particular age group and level. As such, Madam Speaker, educators focus on the skills, concepts and competency development applicable to the age and class of the child, rather than simply the percentage of the syllabus that was completed. To this end, the heads of department with the support of the Curriculum Division would have reviewed the various curricula and identified key skills, concepts and content to be covered that would provide the student with sufficient capability to move to the next level. Therefore, Madam Speaker, the question is not whether or not the students and teachers can complete a particular curriculum but whether the key learning outcomes have been achieved.

In fact, the approach to curriculum delivery that focuses on the student competency, concept and skill acquisition is a more excellent approach to teaching and learning than simply concentrating on the percentage coverage of the syllabus. As such, Madam Speaker, while no adjustment to the curricula is necessary at this time, teachers have been provided with the necessary support from the Curriculum Division to ensure that the key learning outcomes at each level have been achieved.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Ms. Haynes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Has the Ministry taken on board the concerns of parents and students in the CSEC classes about the inability to complete the curriculum in preparation to the CSEC exams this year?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister.

**Hon. Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly:** Thank you. Madam Speaker, the concerns that come forward are not unusual for any particular year and so I have, within the Ministry of Education, no formal concern coming forward from any of the associations or any school that is lodged at the Ministry at this time.

**Edward Trace, Moruga  
(Repair of Bridge)**

**91. Ms. Michelle Benjamin** (*Moruga/Tableland*) asked the hon. Minister of Rural Development and Local Government:

Will the Minister provide an update on the repair of the bridge on Edward Trace, Moruga, which collapsed on August 28, 2021?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Rural Development and Local Government.

**The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the hon. Member for the question. I can confirm that in September 2021, the Ministry did indeed receive a report of a complaint, a collapsed bridge on Edward Trace, Basse Terre, Moruga. I can also confirm that immediately on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, 2021, the engineering division did pay a site visit, did the preliminary assessment. We have since confirmed that the bridge is in fact located on what is the old Petrotrin estate and therefore it is outside the jurisdiction of the Ministry itself. I have, on receiving this particular matter, asked for some coordination with the Heritage and other entities that are in Petrotrin to see how the entity with responsibility can deliver the solution. And of course I will continue to be in progress and conversation with you about it.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Moruga/Tableland.

**Ms. Benjamin:** Supplemental, Madam Speaker. Minister, given that the incident would have taken place 206 days ago, could we have like a timeline or do you have any perceived timeline that something will materialize for the farmers that use this

bridge?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister.

**Hon. F. Al-Rawi:** If the hon. Member wants to be precise, since 1990 we passed the Municipal Corporations Act, and since the 90s the issue of vesting of lands has become a priority. In carrying out the work of my predecessor, the hon. Kazim Hosein, a lot of work was done to identify the vesting of assets. And as a team moving ahead with the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries, we will be able to do what other people have not done before us as we combine our efforts together.

**Moruga/Tableland Constituency  
(Status of Road Repair)**

**92. Ms. Michelle Benjamin** (*Moruga/Tableland*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Will the Minister provide an update on works being conducted on the following roads in the Moruga/Tableland constituency:

- a. Naparima Mayaro Road, Tableland;
- b. Hindustan Estate Road, New Grant; and
- c. Frederick Road, Hindustan, New Grant?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Works and Transport.

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Naparima Mayaro Road has been prioritized for work in this fiscal year under the PURE road rehabilitation programme. The rehabilitation work will be carried out on the stretch of road in Tableland, between LP 533 and LP 40—540. Hindustan Estate Road falls under the purview of the Princes Town Regional Corporation and not the Ministry of Works and Transport, however the Ministry of Works and Transport is willing to provide the corporation with any technical assistance that may be required. And the

Frederick Road is a secondary road which runs off Nagee Road; the road has as low average daily traffic and is in poor condition. Localized rehabilitation work is expected to be undertaken in June 2022, utilizing in-house resources of the Ministry of Works and Transport. I thank you.

**Illegal Quarrying  
(Details of)**

**96. Mr. David Lee** (*Pointe-a-Pierre*) asked the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries:

Will the Minister advise as to the following:

- a. how many illegal quarries and individuals engaged in illegal quarrying have been identified between the period January 01 2021 to January 01 2022; and
- b. how many of the illegal quarries identified have had their operations terminated?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.

**The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, during the period January01, 2021, to January01, 2022, six illegal quarries and individuals engaged in illegal quarrying were identified by law enforcement authorities. One of those illegal quarries, the action being taken there was actually terminated because of course there is always difficulty that when they go to act persons are not on the quarry site.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** [*Inaudible*] A follow-up question, Minister, when you had first taken over as Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, you said that illegal quarrying was one of your priorities. Could you state, based on question—on answer to b., if there is anything in the pipeline to address the illegal quarrying?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister.

**Hon. S. Young:** Thank you very much. Madam Speaker, the answer is, yes. I would not want to get into the operational side of it; it has to be a combination between the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries as well as law enforcement, and we are going to be engaging in some activity directly related to tackling this scourge that is illegal quarrying.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Just a follow-up. Minister, do you have a quantity of illegal—cost of the illegal quarrying to the country?

**Madam Speaker:** And I am not going to allow that as a supplemental question based on the question asked and the answers given. Do you have another question? Okay.

### **Privatisation (Status of Government's Policy)**

**97. Mr. David Lee** (*Pointe-a-Pierre*) asked the hon. Minister of Finance:

What is the Government's policy with regard to the privatisation of banking, rum manufacturing, and port operations?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Finance.

**The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Government does not have a fixed policy with respect to the privatization of banking, rum manufacturing and port operations, and each such matter is dealt with on a case-by-case basis as the need requires and as the circumstances dictate. The divestment and/or investment initiatives undertaken by the Government form part of the rationalization of the state sector to boost economic efficiency, improve resource allocation and ensure wide public participation in the ownership of commercial enterprises. These initiatives involve several strategies, including divestment, acquisition, restructuring, mergers and liquidation of entities.

As part of its broad policy the Government will retain or acquire equity in the state entities where such ownership is integral to the achievement of policy objectives for the sector in which the entity is located. Broadly speaker, the Government will concentrate on providing facilitatory mechanisms, including the removal of constraints to investment in commercial activity and the establishment of the appropriate institutional regulatory and incentive frameworks. However, in facilitating such an appropriate microeconomic environment there will be instances where state participation in commercial enterprise is necessary or may become necessary, especially where some participation is strategic in the national interest or where the private sector is not willing to take the risk in the absence of the state's direct participation.

With regard to banking, in the 2022 budget presentation, in furtherance of the Government's policy to facilitate the widest possible public participation in the divestment of state assets, the Minister of Finance announced the intention of the Government to make an additional public offering of 10,869,565 ordinary shares in First Citizens in order to raise approximately \$550 million for budgetary support. With respect to rum, in July 2018, the Government acquired 61,677,011 shares, representing 29.9 per cent of the shares in Angostura Holdings Limited in partial recovery of the debt owed by CL Financial, Colonial Life and Clico Investment Bank.

It should be noted that the ownership status of Angostura is complicated with claims and counterclaims currently engaging the attention of the liquidator, Clico and the court as to the true ownership of various blocks of Angostura shares. It should also be noted that in order to preserve the value of Government shares in Republic Bank, Angostura and TGU, among others, for the generations to come, the National Investment Fund Holding Company was incorporated in 2018 and

was made a closed-end fund to hold and monetize assets transferred by Government. NIF issued an initial public offering of a suite of bonds ranging from five to 20 years. These bonds are supported by the equity assets transferred to NIF and dividends from the equity investments in five companies are used to service the bonds.

NIF has successfully made good on all of its interest payments to bondholders to date and is an outstanding example of this Government's policy to preserve state assets for the good of the wider population. In terms of the port, in 2021 the Government announced its intention to adopt a landlord model, public-private partnership, to improve the efficiency of the operations of the Port Authority. As a result, the Government through the Port Authority invited expressions of interest from investors with experience in port investments, development and operations, shipping, logistics and cruise operations, thereby encouraging and creating a competitive environment for potential new agreements to be created.

Government is seeking to position the Port of Port of Spain as a major trans-shipment and logistics hub, inclusive of the added value cargo handling activities at the Caricom wharfs and the Port of Scarborough, as well as the potential opportunity of becoming a destination port for cruise shipping in the region. The Government's objective in inviting private participation in the port is to establish a more competitive and financially sustainable port system.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Minister, based on the first question on the FCB shares divestment, when would that come to market?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** We are targeting the middle of the year, June/July.

**Mr. Lee:** On the port operations, when do you see that also being finalized?

**2.00 p.m.**

**Hon. C. Imbert:** I cannot give a definitive answer on that. That is under the control of a committee being managed by the Minister of Public Administration, and including the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Works and Transport and other stakeholders. I would suggest you pose that question on notice.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Naparima.

**Special Reserve Police Officers  
(Outstanding Meal Allowances/COLA)**

**103. Mr. Rodney Charles** (*Naparima*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security:

Will the Minister state when the approximately 380 Special Reserve Police Officers will receive their outstanding meal allowances and COLA since the \$8 million, which was budgeted for 2020, has not been paid?

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The issue which delayed the resolution of this matter, was the determination of the authority of the Commissioner of Police to amend the terms and conditions of employment for special reserve police officers. Since this authority was not found in contemporary records after thorough research, Madam Speaker, reference to such authority was recently traced back to a decision of Cabinet in 1977—45 years ago. Accordingly, the required funding will be released to the TTPS within the next month. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Rise in Mental Illnesses re COVID-19  
(Measures Implemented)**

**107. Mr. Rodney Charles** (*Naparima*) asked the hon. Minister of Health:

In light of calls by mental health experts for the Government to address the notable rise in mental illnesses arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic, will



the Minister state what measures will be implemented to address said mental health challenges?

**The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. From the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, since March 2020, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago remains cognizant of the expected mental health fall-out. In this regard, the following plans were implemented specifically for Covid-19 pandemic and health workers. One, setting up of a mental health and psychosocial support technical working group who developed and implemented a mental health care action plan for the treatment of care of persons who tested positive for COVID-19 who were in isolation and in quarantine, and our dedicated frontline health care workers.

Two, the ongoing use of virtual mental health sessions for patients within the parallel health care system throughout the pandemic. Three, the continued access to mental health care services for health care workers through the employee assistance programme, and existing services provided by the RHAs' multidisciplinary mental health team.

Four, the continued use of the network of mental health services offered at our public health institutions for health care workers and our citizens, including the use of psychiatric outpatient clinics, namely, the Child Guidance Clinics at San Fernando, Port of Spain and Scarborough, and the Children and Adolescents Living with Mental Health clinic at the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. Five, the establishment of stress clinics at the North Central Regional Health Authority and, six, the priority treatment for staff at the mental health wellness clinics.

Further, for our entire population, the Ministry of Health has developed a digital directory of crisis and emergency mental health and psychosocial services

under Find CareTT, with over 30 entities which has been published and widely utilized to ensure easy access to mental health services.

Also, the implementation plan for the National Mental Health Policy anticipates and provides for further increases in mental health needs through the creation of a community mental health team approach, and the incorporation of mental health into the primary health care system.

It is envisaged, Madam Speaker, that the above changes will result in a wider range of mental health services being provided at the community level, and will make those services more accessible to persons who need them, including persons whose mental health challenges were triggered or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Naparima.

**Public Recording of Police Officers  
(Policy Position)**

**108. Mr. Rodney Charles** (*Naparima*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security:

Will the Minister inform the House whether there is a policy regarding members of the public taking photographs or video recordings of police officers in the execution of their duties?

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** Thank you yet again, Madam Speaker. According to information received from the Commissioner of Police, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service does not have a specific policy regarding members of the public taking photographs or video recordings of police officers whilst in the execution of their duty. While there is neither a law nor a policy which prevents citizens from taking photographs or video recordings of police officers, in those circumstances, citizens are advised that recordings should be done at a safe distance between the parties involved so as not to obstruct

officers in the execution of their work.

Obstruction of a police officer is a criminal and chargeable offence, as detailed in section 59 of the Police Officer Service Act, Chap. 15:01, and it states, I quote:

“A person who assaults, obstructs, or resists a police officer in the execution of his duty, or aids or incites another person so to assault, obstruct, or resist a police officer or a person assisting the police officer in the execution of his duty, is liable on summary conviction to a fine of ten thousand dollars and to imprisonment for two years.”

Additionally, it is to be noted that while there are no laws preventing citizens from photographing and/or recording police officers on duty, the pursuance of certain intrusive conduct can amount to harassment which is also a chargeable offence under the Offences Against the Person Act, Chap. 11:08. Section 30 of that Act provides, and I quote:

“For the purpose of this section—

- (a) ‘harassment’ of a person includes alarming the person or causing the person distress by engaging in a course of conduct such as—
  - (i) following, making visual recordings of, stopping or accosting the person;
  - (vii) acting in any other way that could reasonably be expected to alarm or cause the person distress;”

And I continue:

- “(b) a ‘course of conduct’ involves conduct of the kind referred to in paragraph (a) carried out on at least two occasions.
- (2) A person who pursues a course of conduct which amounts to harassment of another and which he knows or ought reasonably to

know amounts to harassment of the other is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of two thousand dollars and to imprisonment for six months.”

In light of the aforesaid, Madam Speaker, citizens should be mindful that while photographing and/or recording a police officer on duty is not, per se, unlawful or illegal, members of the public would be well advised to note the relevant provisions of the Police Service Act and the Offences Against the Person Act, both of which I quoted, and both of which provide that continuously doing so in a manner described above, can amount to harassment and lead to arrest and charges accordingly. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Could the Minister agree to undertake an educational programme, so that police officers and members of the public, including journalists, would be clear as to their rights with respect to the taking of photographs while the police officers are operating?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** The Member is proceeding on the assumption that the members of the media and the members of the public, and most of all police officers, are as shallow as a thimble. I am sure, Madam Speaker, these laws have been on the books a very long time and, there have been many prosecutions in terms and, therefore the Member is presuming that there is no such information or knowledge in the public domain. I do not think he is correct.

**Student Support Services Division  
(Resources to Address Student Absenteeism)**

**117. Ms. Anita Haynes** (*Tabaquite*) asked the hon. Minister of Education:

With regard to in-person classes, will the Minister indicate whether any additional resources have been allocated to the Student Support Services Division to address student absenteeism?

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. With respect to in-person classes and additional resources, the Student Support Services Division, they work in tandem with the rest of the Curriculum Division as well as the Student Supervision Division, and so they have received resources and assistance from those two divisions to be able to deal with student absenteeism.

In addition to that, we have met with the Ministry of National Security, the community police, and the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services to deal with adding additional resources from those Ministries to assist in dealing with absenteeism, because the causes of absenteeism, once we go down to it, sometimes it is a social issue and sometimes we have security issues as well. So we have been working with those two Ministries to be able to provide additional resources from outside of the Ministry to assist in getting home visits for our students who are absent, and we need the community police to assist in those areas, and where we have issues of social need, then we deal with Family Services to provide that.

Also, what we have gotten from the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services would be counselling services for the family, because where the school social workers cannot go further, we require that extra assistance. So, Madam Speaker, what has been happening is the infusion of additional resources outside of the Ministry, in a collaborative fashion, to be able to deal specifically with student absenteeism, and we have been getting that cooperation, and so we have been able to get some of our students who are having that particular issue back into our classrooms.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Ms. Haynes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Minister would recall last year we

had gotten some significant numbers of persons who have been absent from school. So since the allocation of these additional resources, has the Ministry seen an improvement in the number, and will report to the public about the number of student absenteeism that we are seeing?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister.

**Hon. Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly:** Madam Speaker, we can make such a report available. Yes, we have seen in some cases, but it is a dynamic situation. You have some students coming back, and you also have some students who are not coming back, and new students. Above the age of 16 compulsory school attendance is not required, so that is also a part of the issue. When students reach to that age, then they are not required to attend school, so you have some issues of being able to get them back into the classroom at that time. However, yes, we have seen some improvements.

### **COVID-19 Vaccines for Children (Procurement of)**

**118. Ms. Anita Haynes** (*Tabaquite*) asked the hon. Minister of Health:

Will the Minister provide an update on the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines for children between the ages of five and eleven?

**The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh):** Many thanks, Madam Speaker. The policy of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is to administer vaccines to our population that are approved by the World Health Organization. On January 21, 2022, the WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts, SAGE, on immunization, granted approval for the use of vaccines for children between the ages of five to 11 years.

In light of the above, the Ministry of Health is currently in discussions with Pfizer Inc, concerning the terms of a suitable agreement for the provision of these vaccines. In the interim, the Government of Spain has offered Trinidad and Tobago

a gift of 40,000 Pfizer pediatric vaccines, and the vaccination programme for children between the ages of five to 11 years will commence upon the receipt of these vaccines. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Seecheran:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Minister, given what you have just said, why did the Ministry of Health not procure these vaccines pending WHO approval, similar to what was done with the Chinese Sinopharm vaccines?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Health.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** Madam Speaker, the position of the Government is to engage in negotiations. We started negotiations with Pfizer prior to the approval, my friend, and that has been made public, so I do not know what fishing expedition that you are on, and that is the start of the process. So we started this process with Pfizer in 2021, before the vaccines were approved on January 21, 2022. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Minister, in light of your revelation that the vaccines will come from Spain, can you at all give any indication of the time frame expected?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Health.

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** Thank you very much. As I indicated, the vaccination programme for these children will commence upon the receipt of those vaccines. We currently have no firm date, but as with all the vaccines coming in, we are working assiduously behind the scenes to acquire these vaccines in the shortest possible space of time. Yes, and let us hope that you all encourage children to take the vaccines. Thank you very much.

**Madam Speaker:** Caroni East.

**Dr. Seecheran:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Minister, could you give us an idea

of the number of vaccines that would be required for this age group please? The number of vaccines that would be required for the age group five to 11?

**Hon. T. Deyalsingh:** Madam Speaker, the estimate for that age group is about 120,000 children, which would mean about 240,000 doses, if all children take it, but that is not what we are aiming at. These vaccines have very short expiry dates. The gift from Spain may expire in June of 2022, so we are being realistic in what we could administer in that short time frame.

**Dr. Seecheran:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Minister, given the fact that you said that we need 240,000 vaccines for this age group, what are you going to tell the parents that have to send their children to school in April for term three to physical classes, and their children are not vaccinated?

**Madam Speaker:** So, based on the original question asked and the answers thus far, I will not allow that as a supplemental question. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

### **Petrotrin Employees' Pension Plan (Valuation Update)**

**119. Mr. David Lee** (*Pointe-a-Pierre*) asked the hon. Minister Finance:

Will the Minister provide an update on the current valuation of the Petrotrin Employees' Pension Plan?

**The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The most recent valuation of the Petrotrin employee's pension plan, indicates that the aggregate market value of the assets stood at 7.859billion.

**Madam Speaker:** Supplemental, Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Minister stated the most recent valuation. Could he give us a specific date of that recent valuation please?

**Hon. C. Imbert:** September 2019.

**Madam Speaker:** Supplemental, Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Speaker, the Minister in a statement question on February 05,



2020, he stated that there would be a valuation done by June 2020. We are nearly two years. Could the Minister state what happened to that independent valuation that was due June 2020?

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Minister.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Madam Speaker, as usual the Opposition gets everything wrong. The purpose of that valuation is to determine whether there was deficit in the plan, and that was done.

**Madam Speaker:** Supplemental, Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** So could the Minister state if there is a deficit in the Petrotrin pension fund currently?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Finance.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Madam Speaker, dependent on the interest rate used for the actuarial valuation and the methodology, dependent on the interest rate, what I am seeing is that at 6 per cent return, the plan is in surplus. For those who may know something about actuarial valuations, there are scenarios that are presented by actuaries using an assumed rate of return, and assumed yield. [*Interruption*]  
Madam Speaker—

**Mr. Young:** “Is Duppy.”

**Hon. C. Imbert:**—as I said, for those who are familiar with the valuation of pension plans, actuaries present scenarios based on assumed interest rates, and depending on the interest rate that is finally selected, the plan can be in deficit or in surplus. The indication I have is that when an interest rate of 6 per cent is used, the plan is in surplus.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, the question time now has expired. In accordance with Standing Order 29(10), the Whip has signified that all unanswered

questions on the Order Paper today are to be postponed to the next sitting.  
[*Crosstalk*]

*Question time having expired, the following questions (122, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132 and 133) were not dealt with:*

**Taste of Carnival Events  
(Stakeholder Consultations)**

**122.** Could the hon. Minister of Tourism, Culture and the Arts kindly state:

As regards the “Taste of Carnival” events for Carnival 2022, did consultations with the relevant stakeholders inform the Government’s decisions that this particular option provided the best possible value for money? [*Mr. Tancoo*]

**Hindrances to Firefighting Efforts at Bamboo Settlement  
(Prevention of Future Occurrences)**

**125.** In light of reports that low water pressure hindered firefighting efforts at a fire which occurred at Bamboo Settlement No. 2, Valsayn on February 07, 2022, will the hon. Minister of Public Utilities kindly state what measures will be taken to ensure that the issue is addressed to prevent future occurrence? [*Ms. Ameen*]

**CCTV Cameras  
(Details of)**

**126.** Will the hon. Minister of National Security advise, as at February 28, 2022:

- a) how many CCTV cameras are installed in Trinidad and Tobago; and
- b) how many CCTV cameras are operational? [*Ms. Ameen*]

**Heights of Aripo  
(Installation of CCTV Cameras)**

127. Will the hon. Minister of National Security state whether there are plans to install CCTV cameras at the Heights of Aripo where the bodies of murder victims have been found? [*Ms. Ameen*]

**Former Employees of Caroni (1975) Limited  
(Receipt of Residential/Agricultural Leases)**

128. In light of the recent protest action by former employees of Caroni (1975) Limited, will the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries state how many former employees are yet to receive their residential and agricultural leases? [*Mr. Indarsingh*]

**WASA Water Supply Schedule  
(Board of Commissioners Approval)**

129. In light of the 2022 Dry Season Water Supply Schedule recently published by the Water and Sewerage Authority, will the hon. Minister of Public Utilities advise whether said schedule was approved by the Board of Commissioners of WASA? [*Mr. Indarsingh*]

**North West Regional Health Authority  
(Investigation into Lye Incident)**

130. In light of the incident which occurred at the St. James Medical Complex where lye was used on a patient instead of distilled water, will the hon. Minister of Health indicate whether the internal investigation by the North West Regional Health Authority into this incident has been completed? [*Mr. Indarsingh*]

**Long COVID  
(Measures to Treat Patients)**

131. Will the hon. Minister of Health state what measures, if any, are being implemented to treat with patients suffering from “Long COVID”? [*Dr. Seecheran*]

**COVID-19 Vaccination Cards**

**(Illicit Distribution of)**

- 132.** Will the hon. Minister of Health state what specific measures are being implemented to combat the illicit distribution of COVID-19 vaccination cards to the unvaccinated? [*Dr. Seecheran*]

**Adult/Adolescent Pfizer Vaccine  
(Expiration of)**

- 133.** Will the hon. Minister of Health inform the House how many doses of the adult and adolescent Pfizer vaccine stock expired on February 28, 2022? [*Dr. Seecheran*]

**Madam Speaker:** I await the Member for Couva South and the Minister of Finance, before we proceed.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Naparima.

**Hon. Members:** [*Sustained desk thumping*]

**SURGE IN CRIMINAL ACTIVITY  
(GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO PREVENT)**

**Mr. Rodney Charles** (*Naparima*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

*Whereas* the Government has been unable to effectively prevent a surge in criminal activity resulting in rapid increases in murders, robberies and home invasions;

*And whereas* the Government has failed to set and operationalise a forceful and functional crime reduction plan with SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bound) goals to curb the growing murder rate;

*And whereas* the Government has consistently ignored and, through their incompetence, added to the fundamental causes of crime, while focusing on punitive measures instead of preventative measures;

*And whereas* the failure to effectively address crime has created social,

political, economic and cultural crises of immeasurable proportions:

*Be it resolved* that this House reprimand this Government for its failure to effectively prevent the surge in criminal activity in our country.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** Madam Speaker, it brings me no pleasure to come today to highlight the complete incompetence of this PNM kakistocracy.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** I will spell the word for them: K-A-K-I-S-T-O-C-R-A-C-Y.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** It means, Madam Speaker, because I am sure they do not know the meaning of the word, it means government by the most incompetent among us. Minister after Minister has come and gone during this administration's time in office, each worse than the past, and yet the only people who feel comfortable enough roaming freely throughout our nation, from Scarborough to "Pene, Debal".

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** Sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry. [*Laughter*] Penal, Debe, I mean. Sorry, I get mixed up. From Penal, Debe.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** The only people roaming freely are criminals.

The Government will come today and claim that crime has decreased, but they are unable to account for the pervasive feeling of unease felt by the "marish and de parish" in Trinidad and Tobago today. Why does no one feel safe, if they claim crime statistics are down? How reliable are these statistics? Are they being verified by independent third parties?

But, Madam Speaker, the biggest insult towards the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago occurred last week when the Prime Minister reshuffled his Cabinet and

failed to remove the worst, most clueless, most incompetent Minister of National Security we have had in the history of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** The Prime Minister must answer to the citizens of this country and state why he saw it fit to keep the present Minister Hinds, when we are witnessing levels of brutality and blatant disregard for human life from criminals, as we have never seen before.

In the past two years there have been four decapitations. Fire bombings are on the rise, with two sisters dying in one such arson attack last month. Criminals are abducting citizens from their homes and places of work. Our elderly are being constantly targeted, and as a 73-year-old, I feel particularly vulnerable. Shootings are taking place in the presence of children, and our children are being decimated by stray bullets. Numerous execution-style killings. Bodies being found in trunks of cars. Bodies dumped in landfills. Bodies being disposed over cliffs. Our women—our women are specially targeted.

Madam Speaker, this is just one month in Trinidad and Tobago. It is shameful, unacceptable, depressing and infuriating. In 2022, we are in a worse position in this country than we have ever been before.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** Six years they have been in office, and what do they have to show for it? Over 3,000 murders in six years, 15,500 robberies. This is the Wild, Wild West we are talking about, *Tombstone Territory*, where every man is as good as his draw in *Tombstone Territory*. Madam Speaker, 11,700 burglaries, 1,200 home invasions, and this is data from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. These are the kinds of criminal activities that citizens have to put up with on a daily basis.

Our issues extend far past simply locking up criminals. Every Ministry, from education to social development, to sport, to agriculture, has a role to play in producing an environment that encourages national growth and development, with a consequential reduction in criminal activity.

Madam Speaker, no wonder. We all know that all the Ministries are not performing optimally. I did not say so alone. The Vice-President of Guyana said so recently. He said Trinidad and Tobago is falling apart.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** It is known globally. It is known regionally. Under this PNM administration we have a kakistocracy—kakistocracy, government by the most incompetent among us.

Now, if you talk about an all of government approach to crime, it means that the Minister of National Security must be able to influence his Cabinet colleagues to play their part in reducing crime. But it seems—it seems—in fact, I would say “me thinks” that the Member for Laventille West clearly lacks the persuasive skills to influence his ministerial colleagues to play their role in what a former Minister of National Security, Edmund Dillon, said, an all of government approach to dealing with crime.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** I do not think that this Minister, and this is part of the problem, is able to have sway over the Finance Minister, the Education Minister, the Minister of Social Development and Family Services. We need somebody who has respect. We have somebody who could command his colleagues to help him and join in this all of government approach to dealing with crime.

**2.30 p.m.**

I, and I think the Government must apologize to former Minister of National

Security, Edmund Dillon, who always spoke of an all of government approach that apparently fell on deaf ears by this kakistocratic Government that presents themselves as a responsible First World administration.

Madam Speaker, the Minister of National Security has failed to acknowledge that it is his responsibility and his duty to ensure that his colleagues cooperate and collaborate with him to address the root causes of crime. The buck stops with him.

But what do we have? We have a plethora of acting appointments with the Acting Commissioner of Police. And we have an Acting Commissioner of Prisons and I could go on, and on, and on. We have a Hollywood Ministry of National Security, “everybody acting”. And we hear—and I do not have the facts. The papers have said that the prison outbreak, one of the prisoners that was caught might be a situation that was a car rented by the prison service and there is suggestion that they could have been acting. Hollywood style. Big joke. Ministry that is not serious and this Minister, this incompetent Minister of National Security is failing every citizen of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** He has failed the Ministry of National Security and every subdivision under him. And the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister has failed the country, every citizen and every victim of crime by allowing the Minister of National Security to retain his post.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** He should have been moved. He should have been reallocated. He should have been shifted away. The farther away for the seat of the governance, the better.

**Mr. Gonzales:** Madam Speaker, I rise on 48(1). Madam Speaker, this is a Motion



on crime against the Government, not a Motion against the Minister of National Security.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. So, Member for Naparima, I will give you a little leeway. But it is a valid point, in that remember this is not a no confidence Motion in the Minister of National Security. Okay? So, please, you have a number of aspects and while you may say that this is part of it, this is not the whole focus of your Motion. Okay?

**Mr. R. Charles:** Thank you. I am guided, Madam Speaker. So we could ask the question: Why is it crime is so prevalent? And criminals feel that they have a freedom to operate with impunity in Trinidad and Tobago? And I—the leadership of the Ministry is critical in solving crime. We cannot discuss the abject performance without holding to account those who are responsible for the operationalization of the policies.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** But I am guided. I am guided. I am guided. Madam Speaker, when we do performance appraisals, we look at outputs or results-based markers, not activity markers. And before somebody jumps up, I want to say that we have spent— in paragraph 2 we talk about SMART goals and I am speaking specifically about the non-existence of SMART goals in the operationalization of the Ministry by Minister Hinds.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** Madam Speaker, we do not talk about activity. I worked for years, in 1981, in Trintoc and every—my boss at the time was—he is still alive, Mr. Howard—I will remember his name shortly. He used to hold monthly, weekly appraisals—Hugh Howard—monthly appraisals based on targets, not based on

activities. You could not go to him and say, “I had a magazine. We had six for the month. We did this, we did that. We did the other.” He said, “I do not want to hear what you did. I want to hear the results of what you did.” And that is why—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:**—First World countries operate on the principle of SMART goals. So, you do not give a 10-point crime plan which was a glorified list of empty promises. In management we must understand the fundamental difference between activity, otherwise called process-based planning, and outputs-based management approach. There are thousands of persons, citizens in Trinidad who have done bachelors of management, MBAs, and they know that in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century no Minister could come and talk, give a list of things that they are doing. They must at some stage talk about the results of the list that they are presenting.

In their response, today, I am sure that those opposite will provide a list of activities that they are implementing to deal with crime. The world is not interested in a list. The world is interested in the results of your activity.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** And I reiterate, lists do not matter. You can well have a well-developed list of activities with no results. Listing activities is an antediluvian approach to management. The failed 10-point crime plan was merely a list of activities to deal with crime.

The first point on that crime plan, Madam Speaker, was concerning the process to appoint a Police Commissioner. But what the Government cannot to this day say was, what was the output target for that item. Because all they are interested in is presenting, we did this, we did that, we are doing this, we are buying cars, we are buying this, we are doing that, we are doing the other. No results. That is why we would have the anti-gang legislation which is included in

crime and we are told that it will solve crime. We know the names of everybody. We know everything about gangs. But at the end of the day, no measurable difference with the Anti-Gang Act.

Madam Speaker, would the appointment of a Commissioner of Police, which is point one in their 10-point crime plan, lead to a 20 per cent reduction in home invasion in three years? A SMART goal would have said that. And I challenge this Minister, he cannot, he will not come this afternoon and tell us—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:**—he will reduce murders by 10 per cent. He cannot say that. He will tell us all the million and thousand and one ineffective things that a kakistocratic government will lay before an unsuspecting society and a Parliament.

You will read about targets like this, Madam Speaker, and I have done my research. You will read about targets in Singapore. Sorry, I would have said Barbados but I am advised. Singapore—

**Hon. Members:** [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. R. Charles:**—I will stick with Singapore. In Singapore, Ministers are paid a flat salary with bonuses based on SMART performance targets, Madam Speaker. So that if we have a Minister, like Minister Hinds, if he reduces the murders by 10 per cent, for example, in his first year his bonus would probably be 6 per cent of his salary. And that—I want to make that fundamental point today, that we are missing the boat as a country that is aspiring to First World status when we resort to lists.

If, on the other hand, murders were to increase under his watch by 10 per cent or more he would be flagged in his performance appraisal. If in the following year there were no measurable performance improvements, he would be fired. And I want to tell Minister Hinds, if you were in Singapore today, you will be fired.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** I rise on Standing Order 48(1), and specifically, Madam Speaker, in the context of the hypothesis that this Member—he is even outside his own Motion. Again, this is not a substantive Motion on the Minister and I ask for your consideration.

**Madam Speaker:** So, Member, I have advised you before. I uphold the objection. Okay? And I hope you will abide by the advice. Okay?

**Mr. R. Charles:** I will confine my contribution to the SMART goals alone. I would not mention anybody, Madam Speaker. But SMART goals are specifically indicated in the Motion before us today.

**Madam Speaker:** Member—

**Mr. R. Charles:** Yes.

**Madam Speaker:**—I have no difficulty with the SMART goals. I have advised you and I hope you will abide by it.

**Mr. R. Charles:** In a country like Singapore, goals will be set; goals will be set for any Minister and if the goals are not met specifically, that Minister, whoever he may be, would be fired.

So, when we—what we have in Trinidad are statements, we have lists, we have 10-point plans, we have indications of what they are going to do. And at the end of the day, we do not know where it will lead us.

So, let us take for our country. For the month of March, our news headlines read—and I will just give some examples. One, 38-year-old taxi driver robbed at gunpoint, car stolen. Two, two men shot during home invasion in Carlsen Field. Three, gunmen open fire at Valsayn Shopping Plaza. Four, man shot and robbed in his own apartment. Five, two children, among three, robbed, tied up in an attempted home invasion in Arima. Six, a 54-year-old man in Wallerfield killed during a home invasion. Seven, 53-year-old sergeant robbed and beaten in home

invasions in Gasparillo; 23-year-old construction worker shot while sitting in his truck. This is the month of March we are talking about. Woman robbed of her vehicle in broad daylight. Chopping incident between two people, both hospitalized. One month we are talking about. Madam Speaker, these are just a few. If I read all the headlines on crime under this Government we would be here all day. Is this what the Prime Minister calls good performance, satisfactory performance?

The new Attorney General must not come with a suite of legislation because if we are dealing crime, legislation is an aspect of dealing with it. He cannot come with a suite of legislation like his predecessor without telling us that, if we pass this law, kidnappings per year will be nil, break-ins will be reduced by 15 per cent, convictions will increase by 80 per cent and our recidivism rates will be reduced by 50 per cent. That is what we want. Nothing else here will impress us on this side, unless we heard clear targets. So, at the end of the year, we can see whether you delivered or not and we can hold you to account.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** Madam Speaker, even in scripture you have to detail your results. So, when God asked Peter, what you do and he said—or who do you say I am? And he said—Peter—God said, I asked you, who do you say I am. I am asking this Government, are you reducing the murder rate by 10 per cent in one year? Are you reducing break-ins by 15 per cent? I do not want to hear about your activities. Instead, they have dropped the ball with their vaunted list of activities that allow criminals to run free.

Now, since we have had new leadership in the Ministry, we have had an upward trend in crime; upward trend in crime. Between July 2020—in July 2020, there were 33 murders. One year later, in July 2021, it increased from 33 to 37, an

increase in murders. Between August—sorry, August 2020, there were 22 murders. Guess what? A year after, that is August 2021, the August just past here, it increased from 22 to 35. For heaven's sake.

In September—we could go through month by month and see where we are headed in crime. September 2020, there were 23 murders. In September, one year later, 2021, 38. October 2020, 33 murders; October 2021, it moved from 33 to 58. For heaven's sake; for heaven's sake. November, it is worse. In November, worse. There were 24 murders in 2020; 24. In November 2021, it moved from 24 to 69; 69. Where are we going? And that is why people looking on in the region will say things are falling apart.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** Chinua Achebe would say differently:

‘...the centre cannot hold.’

In December, 27 murders—in December 2020, 27 murders; 2021, 34. In January, that is the first month for this year, we had 25 murders; 25, eh. In January 2022, it doubled from 25 to 52. Where are we going? And I am not calling nobody who is responsible for this. I “ain’t” saying that. Somebody will jump up and say, “It is not about a Minister.” These are the facts.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** These are the facts. And facts are stubborn things. They do not go away. So, you could laugh. You could pretend. The performance is dismal and in a country like Singapore you will be fired.

February '21, 27 murders. February '22, 36 murders, Madam Speaker. From April, if you want to compare—you want to compare murders from the '19/2021 using the TTPS data as well as news report, April '19/ 2020 to February2021, you want to compare that with April 2021 to February 2022—and that is when this

Minister was appointed. I know it is not about the Minister but I make the point.

**Madam Speaker:** You see that is point. You crafted your Motion. You crafted your Motion and your Motion is about the Government and the failure of the Government. You crafted it.

**Mr. R. Charles:** The Government—during last year and this year, there has been a 15 per cent increase in murders for a similar period, the Government. There has been a 94 per cent increase in fraud offences by the Government, year on year. There has been a 47 per cent increase in wounding and shootings under this Government. There has been a 56 per cent increase in kidnappings under this Government. A 41 per cent increase in murders of the elderly; the elderly. Nobody is safe. At least 97 larcenies of dwelling houses, 1,072 burglaries and break-ins. This is not Baghdad. This is not Kyiv. This is Trinidad and Tobago. Twenty business places robbed in a year. And yet, Madam Speaker, we are—the Government will come and say, “We have performed. We are a First World Government.” Madam Speaker, I say to them, we are a kakistocracy, government by the most incompetent among us.

This Government has severely neglected our prison infrastructure and rehabilitative programmes. Madam Speaker, we are all shocked by the escape of five convicted prison criminals from the Golden Grove Prison through dormitories. And we have reached the stage where we are celebrating that we have captured them. We are celebrating that we have captured escaped—we have a low conviction rate and when we convict them, they jump through the roof and escape and we celebrate, champagne, drink, we have captured them.

The Government has spent 42 billion; “buh-buh-buh” billion on national security, passed law after law and yet something as simple as upgrading our prisons to ensure convicted criminals serve their punishment, they have been found

wanting. The President of the Prison Officers' Association, Ceron Richards, said, and I quote:

“Those dormitories are in dire need of repairs, and have been for some time. The infrastructure, dare I say, is dilapidated, and ought to be broken down and rebuilt.”

That is a quote from the *Express*, March 22, 2022.

He further stated, and I quote:

“More money is typically spent on transportation than the actual upgrade of security.”

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Naparima, based on your Motion, I stand on Standing Order 48(1), based on the text of your Motion. Okay? So, please, get back on track.

**Mr. R. Charles:** Madam Speaker, I am addressing the area where:

“...the failure to effectively address crime has created social, political...”—  
their failure to address crime.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** And the fact—

**Madam Speaker:** Member, please proceed and be guided by my ruling.

**Mr. R. Charles:** So that we have a situation where crime is out of control and they have failed to address in measurable proportions the situation with crime. I will give some statistics in terms of the measure. Trinidad—in measurable proportions, eh. Trinidad and Tobago embarrassingly has a prison population that is per capita higher than 185 countries. I am giving a measurable index here. Trinidad has 276 prisoners per hundred thousand of population. That is statistical data before us. And if we have more persons in prison per capita, it means something—the measurements are not adding up. As my political leader would say, the maths is



not “mathsing”. Something is not right. When we look at the statistics, in this PNM administration, we—the statistics indicate that thousands of our citizens are now in jail.

They will quote statistics to say that they have arrested—and this is part of the data that is necessary to talk about crime and the performance of crime in Trinidad and Tobago. They would say that they have arrested, given fines and ticketed thousands. But they will never give a specific target of reducing our prison population by 50 per cent in two years. That is why I will come back in all my talks to the point that what we need is data, measurable targets that we can hold them to account.

This Government has no imagination, no creativity and expertise to intervene, to revamp our programmes, to aim at reducing recidivism rates which is a measurable information index in the assumptions behind crime. And this is fundamental to the Motion, that we do not have the data and wherever we have the data, the Government is found wanting.

Last year, we had reports of prisoners calling hits from prison. Now, that is part of—if we had 50 calls from hits from a prison, that is part of the measurable performance of the Government. A hit list with 13 prison officers named, that is part of the data that is before us. And if could—we could not—we could ignore the data and walk away and the country will be left with persistent crime. And all of us, today for me, tomorrow for somebody else. We know it. One of the things that—we have to face up to truth, however bad it is, and deal with it. If we obfuscate, if we hide, if we do not want to hear it, then we will remain their pariah in this region.

Madam Speaker, under this country, when you look at the data—

**Hon. Member:** [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. R. Charles:**—pariah. When you look at the data about illegal guns and whatnot—

**Hon. Members:** [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. R. Charles:**—we see endless problems.

**Madam Speaker:** All right. Members, I would really like to hear the Member for Naparima. Member, please continue.

**Mr. R. Charles:** Yeah. We have seen no need to approach the head of the various Ministries and hold them to targets; hold them to targets. According to the TTPS statistics, there have been 3,671 woundings and shootings since 2016; 3,617 since this Government took office. At least 2,200 murders, since they came to office in 2015, have been shootings; 75 per cent of murders since—I am not going there. Where is the emphasis on catching persons responsible for arming these criminals? Who is bringing in the guns and who is tracking the data for that?

Madam Speaker, they cried crocodile tears asking for anti-gang legislation yet gang activity is increasing. Today in the *Guardian*—and you see this Government does not like to face reality. The *Guardian* says today, the revelation—again, I cannot talk about the Minister. But again, there is data and I have to bring it forward. They are saying that the MP was trying to find out why, despite the Anti-Gang Act, there continues to be escalation in gang violence. The Minister ought to come and say, there is not—there is an increase and these are the steps we are taking to reduce it. And I would have said, everything is good. But it is clear that they realize that we are suck in an antediluvian mode, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Commissioner of Police McDonald Jacob in January this year said that an average of almost 60 per cent of the murderers every year is linked to gang warfare. How much?

**Hon. Member:** Three minutes.

**Mr. R. Charles:** Yeah. Thanks. Yeah? The Minister on Wednesday—we were told in this honourable House that the escalation in gang violence is due to the death of a known gang leader towards the end of 2021. No problem with that. But why is it always a known gang leader? For heaven’s sake, under the anti-gang legislation, it is illegal to be gang member. So, if you know that he is a known gang member, he should be in jail, Madam Speaker.

Now, I want to make the point that we have spent—in our crime-fighting strategies, we have spent on crime suppression, the 80 per cent of our money and 20 per cent on crime prevention and crime rehabilitation. Madam Speaker, in Canada and in other countries, it is the reverse. So, do not claim that police clubs are being used to guide our youth away from being wrongly influenced and then give them a total budget of a measly \$2million for nine police divisions which means 77 police stations. When the SSA receives \$287 million—if you “doh” want to confront that, cool. I could walk away, cool. But you cannot spend 287 on SSA and spend pennies on youth clubs, on the CCC, on MiLAT, on MYPART, on 4-H clubs, on a national mentorship programme under the Ministry of Sport and Community Development, under youth apprenticeship programme in agriculture and others. This Minister should come when he is responding to me and say, “I will shift the budget allocation from 80 per cent for crime suppression to 40 per cent for rehabilitation and crime prevention.”

Madam Speaker, we are in trouble. We are in significant trouble. As long as our security arms are not equipped because the Government has failed to effectively address crime, which is part of the Motion, if they do not allocate the resources, we will be in trouble.

The promised state-of-the-art forensic science centre is nowhere near completion. Madam Speaker, we have data again, statistics again, 10,000 police

officers in Trinidad for a population of 1.4 million. Residential communities, business communities and all constituencies can more than adequately be patrolled and protected day and night. We have 10,000 police officers. With this number, we should be commanding the streets. Toronto—I visit Toronto fairly regularly and they have 3 million, we have 1.4. They have 5,000 police. We have 10,000 and you can see police in Toronto more than in Trinidad. These are the problems. The data is needed. However, the Motion is worded, data is needed to confront the issue of crime.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**3.00 p.m.**

Data again, data again, Madam Speaker. How could we expect to catch criminals, when you call a police station the response time could be an hour, two hours or two days? Global best practices suggest a five-minute response time. I want the Government, when they respond, to tell this country unequivocally what is the new response time for police if you make a call to the police station telling them that there is criminal activity in your house? Unless we answer those questions you could come with all the lists in the world it will make no sense, and country will be suffering from the scourge of crime. The TTPS system needs to move past physical station diaries that are often cannot be found. We have officers that do not have their pocket diaries on them so they cannot take a report. Up to today we are not clear, I have seen where police officers have stopped people from taking photographs while they are doing their work, and the persons were not interfering.

We have officers losing pocket diaries. We have station diaries with loose pages. This cannot be 2022. Why are we not fully computerized? Come and tell me that, when we talk, when you respond. Our officers across the board need ongoing

training in diffusion tactics—a word I just learned today. The required improved investigative training to catch criminals with hard proof that cannot be thrown out in the court over trivial issues like incorrect recording. You could not want to hear that. And we could continue being a Third World country. Or you listen to it, yes I am stating it in a way that perhaps someone who supports the Government may not like to hear. But if you hear it and if you act on it, all of us will be better off.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** But if you dismiss it, if you dismiss it, we will continue operating as we are doing, free for all. I fear that many of our national security personnel have lost pride and accomplishment they ought to have in keeping the nation and citizens safe. This Government has done nothing to improve morale and nothing to improve sense of duty to country to the detriment of the crime situation. Today, a question was answered about SRPs. And the SRPs called me and begged, begged, because for years they have not been paid what was due to them. We are now told—and take congratulation for that—that they will be paid next month. And they called me on my cell and they told me they are congratulating us. Let us hear—I said it before as the scripture says, let us reason together, let us treat each other with respect and we could work out a better Trinidad and Tobago. I really want Trinidad to be better than Guyana. I want it to be better than Barbados.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:** I want it to be better than Singapore. I want it. I “doh” want to run and leave. And you and me have to work together, but cut out the smug nonsense. The smug nonsense. Treat us with respect—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. R. Charles:**—and we will work in the interest of Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Speaker, I know that this Government has problems with mathematics and

whatnot, but it is on and on. We need to develop an all of government, an all of science, a data-driven approach to our planning. This Government has no plan or vision to make Trinidad safe or secure. Madam Speaker, it is the third month of 2022, and under this Government and under this Minister we have had to date 112 murders. They have no vision, no plan, no way forward. It is happening throughout all Ministries. Vice-President Jagdeo tells us that our country is falling apart. I “doh” like to hear that. I love my country. I love my country.

Madam Speaker, with those in mind, I have some questions for the Minister: When will he tell us he will reduce murder rate by 30 per cent? When will he tell us that he will reduce crime by 40 per cent? When will he tell us that convictions will increase by 60 per cent? When will the Minister sit with all arms of the national security and discuss the way forward and how to tackle the crime upsurge? When will he finally discuss an all-of-government approach and come up with realistic targets? Madam Speaker, my other colleagues will develop areas, legal and educational aspects, how we need to get this thing together. But I leave with the point, that this Government must understand that they do not have knowledge, and they do not have it all, and that they must listen, exchange so that we could produce a better Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Ms. Haynes:** He said—

**Madam Speaker:** One minute please?

**Ms. Haynes:** Yeah.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I really did not hear. I know you came back but I did not hear.

**Mr. R. Charles:** Madam Speaker, I beg to move.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you. This Motion requires a seconder.

**Ms. Haynes:** Yeah.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Ms. Haynes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I second the Motion and I reserve my right to speak.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, the Motion being seconded, I shall now propose the question for debate.

*Question proposed.*

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of National Security.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, as I rise to respond to this Motion as submitted by the Member for Naparima. Very early in his presentation, Madam Speaker, he described the Government of which I am a proud part, as incompetent, and he described yours truly as Minister of National Security as equally incompetent.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** But, Madam Speaker—

**Hon. Members:** Yes. Yes. [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Madam Speaker, the United National Congress—and he supports the Member for Siparia as his leader, eh.

**Hon. Members:** [*Continuous desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Madam Speaker, he will condemn Vasant Bharath, he will condemn the Member for Oropouche East but he will support Siparia. And, Madam Speaker, the Member for Siparia as Prime Minister of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago selected and had six persons in the Ministry of National Security in five years. If you want to describe something as incompetent and bad

picked is that. And one of them was someone, Madam Speaker—

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, 48(1), please.

**Ms. Ameen:** He talked about Siparia. Vasant is—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Defend your track record, if yuh have any.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Couva South, it seems that you are intent on delaying us today. I had to wait for you to stop to stand up and rule. So, if that is going to be the case, you know, you and I have a certain understanding, you take a lil walk and you come back and you comply. Okay? Let us go ahead. Member for Laventille West, I am giving you a “lil” leeway but remember this Motion is about this Government.

**Hon. Members:** *[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I was only responding to the allegation that the Government is incompetent and so on. Madam Speaker, one of them, as I said, was at the time of the selection, well-known, well wanted intentionally by marshals of other jurisdictions, put him in the Cabinet, one of six.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Madam Speaker, 48(1). Again, this is not about—Madam Speaker, 48(1), the Minister being irrelevant as usual.

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. So, as I said, Member, this is about this present Government, and while I am giving you some leeway to answer some of the things, not everything that is tangential, I am going to allow you to develop. So please, quickly wrap up your point and move on.

**Hon. Members:** *[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. F. Hinds:** So, to quickly wrap up, quickly wrap up, chose a Senator, chose a former Attorney General, both of whom are before the criminal courts today. That is incompetence.

**Hon. Members:** *[Desk thumping]*



**Mr. Tancoo:** Again, irrelevant, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Madam Speaker, the Member for Naparima, he spoke about bodies in cars and robberies and murders and break-ins. What is the reality? Those unfortunately are not new to Trinidad and Tobago. Those are not unique to our term in Government. These crimes have been committed in Trinidad and Tobago from the birth of this nation as a nation state, and most certainly when they were in the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. So, what is that all about? Nothing new in Trinidad and Tobago. In one weekend in 2011, there were six or seven murders and it led to a state of emergency.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Again, irrelevant again.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Irrelevant?

**Ms. Ameen:** 48(1), Madam Speaker. It is not about 2011.—

**Hon. F. Hinds:** [*Inaudible*] Madam Speaker, and this Motion—

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. If everybody wishes to speak at the same time, I will sit down and let everybody speak. If you all feel that is going to be productive.

**Hon. Member:** [*Inaudible*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member—Oropouche West, I can hear you. Okay? Yes, again, I am allowing you some leeway to answer some of the things, but please let us get on with the Motion.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Madam Speaker, The Member for Naparima described this Government as catastrophic. Well, I describe his as kleptocratic.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** The Member spoke as well about acting appointments. I mean, every child should know, and every Member of Parliament should know.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** 48(6).

**Mr. Lee:** 48(6) please. The Minister used a word on my Member—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** 48(1) and (6).

**Mr. Lee:** 48(6).

**Madam Speaker:** No word was used on your Member. No word was used on your Member. Your Member used a particular word, this Member has responded. Please continue.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Every child and every Member of Parliament should know, the question of appointments to the position of Deputy Commissioner and Commissioner of Police, Commissioner of Prisons is a matter for the Police Service Commission, a matter for the Public Service Commission, a matter for the Teaching Service Commission. So for the Member for Naparima to point fingers on this side of the House and talk about acting appointments is disingenuous and ignorant to say the least.

Madam Speaker, let me put that to rest. It is dumb and ignorant, and it is designed, Madam Speaker, to mislead the unwary minds in the society. Those are matters for the service commissions, has nothing to do with the Government or the Minister. The Motion, Madam Speaker, is based on a false premise. It is designed to please his cheering and reckless friends in other places, Madam Speaker. It is designed to create scandal and discomfort and dis-ease in our society. So let me begin with some statistics, some facts and figures. The Member for Naparima told us that the world is interested in results. Let me talk a bit about some results.

Madam Speaker, in respect of murders, and this is information gleaned, Madam Speaker, from the Crime and Problem Analysis Unit of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, official statistics. In respect of murders: whilst murders increased in 2021, 450 of them, unfortunately, when compared with 2020 which was 399, the statistics still represent a significant decrease in what occurred in the previous—in years immediately before that. For example, with 539 murders in 2019 and 516 in

2018, Madam Speaker. So that the data presented, Madam Speaker, shows no indication of any rapid or out-and-out increase in murders. Those are the statistics, Madam Speaker. In respect of break-ins, similarly we have seen a significant decrease in the occurrence of break-ins and robberies. In 2021 there were 1,510 break-ins; whilst in 2020 there were 1,736. In 2017, Madam Speaker, by way of example, 2,176; 2118, 2,026; in 2019, 2,217; in 2020, as I said earlier 1,736; in 2021, 1,510; and to date in 2022, 357.

Again, Madam Speaker, the data reflecting and does not demonstrate any rapid increase in break-ins as has been suggested by the Member for Naparima. In respect of robberies, in 2017 recorded were 2,913; in 2018 3,246; in 2019, 3,018; in 2020, 2,082; in 2021, 1,868; and to date in 2022, 494. The robberies and break-ins reported in 2021 represent the lowest number of such report over the last five years spanning from 2017 to 2021. Those are the facts. And that is why I suggest that the Member in his normal boisterous, annoying way came today on a false premise to create disturbance and discomfort as the UNC is wont to do in the national community. In respect of initiative in response to these, Madam Speaker, the TTPS—and you see, this Motion is framed to talk about the Government, but the Member for Naparima knows full well that no Minister of Government had any powers of arrest or a right or a power to investigate anything. If I did I would have locked up plenty “ah dem”.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** But unfortunately, I do not. And I heard the Member make a most outrageous comment here today when he was talking about some gang leader. I gave an answer in the Senate on Tuesday, and I said on the information I received from the police that it was the death of a well-known gang leader that led to some turmoil and some turbulence in the criminal community. And the Member for

Naparima made a most outrageous comment, that is a known gang leader, once you know he should be in jail. Well, if that was so the benches around him will be half-filled and I could back that up.

**Madam Speaker:** Just know. Member. [*Interruption*] Member, I will ask you to withdraw that.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I withdraw that.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you very much.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I withdraw that, Madam Speaker. But I will talk about LifeSport in a little while, with your leave, and I will talk about white collar crime, with your leave. And who among their previous friends in handcuffs today for white collar criminal activity in this country, and who was thrown out of a Joint Select Committee because a Police Commissioner two years ago—

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Speaker, 48(1), irrelevant.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** —came to that Joint Select Committee—irrelevant?

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. So, Member, let us get back on track with the Motion, please.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I am very much obliged. Madam Speaker, in respect of the police response to this, and I have already demonstrated that the statistic from the Crime and Analysis Problem—Crime and Problem Analysis Unit of the Police Service has demonstrated that his Motion is flawed insofar as they are responding.

The police service designed a strategic plan for the next three years. I had the benefit of listening to it rolled out by the Police Commissioner and his team just about a month ago at the Police Academy. And came away telling the public that I was impressed with the work, the thoughts, the ideas, because I have been around this platform for a very long time, a former police officer myself. And I know it was a solid, well-thought out, well-organized strategic plan which is now

being rolled out almost to every police officer so everybody could buy in and understand what is involved, and it came complete with an operating plan.

Over the last five years, Madam Speaker, spanning the period 2017 to 2021, the police service seized a total of 4,376 illegal firearms, take them out of the hands of the criminals. In my view, that is not enough. Another arm, the SSA of the national security, the intelligence gathering agency told us in one of our regular heads of divisions meeting where we strategize and look at their professional plans in response to this situation, told us that there are about 12,000, they estimate, illegal firearms in this country. Some people think there might even be more. So as a consequence a strategy was developed, and Mr. Jacob announced it two weeks ago, to engage all arms of national security, from fire to police, prison, defence force, everyone, including the intelligence agencies, along with the customs and immigration, to engage in a national firearm retrieval exercise in this country, where it is my hope as Minister, on behalf of the people of this country, that they will retrieve about 6,000 illegal firearms in six months. That is my dream. That is my ambition. And I know if we work hard these are physical things, sitting somewhere, hiding somewhere, we can find them. Meanwhile we have a very active and robust border security and management programme in place.

I can tell you now, Madam Speaker, the radar system is now 100 per cent functional, recently made so. And now we can see everything that is happening around our islands, and we are building our capacity to respond to those, as we did in with the OPVs, which another government destroyed and dismantled, making our defence weaker, and allowing more drugs and guns, and human trafficking to occur and come into our country. And coming shamelessly today to ask us what we are doing about crime. My question to them is, what are you doing as parliamentarians to support the legislation that the police and the defence platform

require in order to carry out their job? That is my question.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Set “ah” hypocrites.

**Hon. Members:** [*Continuous desk thumping*]

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Speaker, 48(4), 48(4).

**Madam Speaker:** You sure that is the Standing Order you want to raise?

**Ms. Ameen:** [*Inaudible*]

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. So, Member, I think you could rephrase that please.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I withdraw that, Madam Speaker. This country is filled with hypocrites and the Parliament is not devoid of some.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Speaker—

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Madam Speaker—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Speaker, 48(4).

**Madam Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Madam Speaker, I have noticed, I have noticed very, very carefully, because I studied criminology too, you know. A Master’s degree level in the University of London from whence I came. And, Madam Speaker, I have noticed that a retired Justice of Appeal in this country called Mr. Stanley John issued a report in respect of the legal firearm regime in this country, and he told the country in that report, Madam Speaker, that what transpired was a “well-oiled” to use his words, a “well-oil criminal enterprise”. And I have noticed that not one of my friends on the other side, outside of this House or inside of this House have ever once mentioned it, and coming to talk to me about crime today. Not one! Not one word, not one question, not one Motion, not a squeak. Not from Siparia, not from Naparima, not from St. Augustine. Not one! And all I will ask, and they must

Surge in Criminal Activity  
Hon. F. Hinds (cont'd)

2022.03.25

tell me in this debate, is why not?

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And, Madam Speaker, the Member for Naparima filed this Motion. He filed this Motion, and I did not hear—we are talking about crime, you know. I did not hear one word about Ramdeen or Ramlogan.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Not one word about EMBD, not one word about LifeSport, which the record shows cost plenty lives in this country.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And what started out—

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Speaker.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** What started out—

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Speaker, once again, 48(1). This Motion is not about the UNC and Ramlogan and et cetera.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Please, continue.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Thank you very much. We are talking about crime, and I can tell you about crime as a Minister of National Security. Not a word about LifeSport, not a word. Not a mention of a company called SIS. And again I must ask as I pass on, Madam President, why not? And that is why I told you, Madam Speaker, this country is full of a set of hypocrites, and this Parliament is part of this country.

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Speaker—

**Mr. Lee:** 48(4) and (6), Madam Speaker.

**Mrs. Persad–Bissessar SC:** This House has rules. You cannot use that word.

**Ms. Ameen:** [*Inaudible*]—we know that already. [*Interruption*]

**Madam Speaker:** I ruled when the Member made a certain comment as regards

persons on a particular side. The Member has since corrected that and said that the country is full of hypocrites and this Parliament is not, you know, excluded from that. I allow that.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Madam Speaker, year to date, as at today's date—[*Interruption*]  
Madam Speaker, I am being disturbed, could you protect me?

**Madam Speaker:** Members, we are early in the debate. I am sure every Member who wishes to contribute will have an opportunity. So, let us get on with it.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Madam Speaker, a year to date, the police have retrieved a 153 firearms, 28 rifles, 83 pistols, 25 revolvers, five shotguns, two submachine guns, 10 hand-made guns; a total of 153, and they have arrested around those 215 people. A serious focus on illegal firearms, because we know they are contributing 87 per cent of the murders of which the Member for Naparima spoke, as though it was new in Trinidad and Tobago. So the police service in response to this has instituted a patrol and deployment policy, and that was launched and operationalized throughout the police service, spreading the resources they have, generating more presence and more visibility to give comfort to the citizens of the country.

I oversaw the institution of that before the Christmas last, in the City of Port of Spain, and I consulted with some of the business owners personally, who told me about how effective it was, and I am aware it was happening in Arima, it was happening in Point Fortin, it was happening in San Fernando, and Chaguanas as well. The municipal police—one of the initiatives of this Government was to strengthen the municipal police platform by 14,000 officers, 100 each for each of the municipalities, so that they could focus on the business of local properties and cemeteries and so on, and these kinds of basis stuff, public property in their spaces, and allow the national police to do its work otherwise.



He did not speak a word about that today in this Motion, trying to create what the police call a safe city, and in so doing divisions of the police service have increased their foot and mobile patrols in an effort to improve the feeling of safety and security to deter would-be offenders in the pursuit of this safe city initiative. Only last night I got a call from a constituent of mine who reported to me that there was an incident close to his home, and he told me, and verily believe it to be true, within the space of 10 minutes, Madam Speaker, 13 police cars responded to that last night in the Morvant district. And I was very proud, because I am aware of the institution of this patrol and deployment policy.

**3.30 p.m.**

In addition to that, partnership with Crime Stoppers to encourage people, Madam Speaker, to give information anonymously to the police. We came here with whistleblower legislation asking our friends on the other side to support a regime, a legal regime where people who gave information that the police need, whether it is in civil matters, whether it is in land grabbing issues out of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, as is very prevalent today, revealed by a recent Minister, whether it is in respect of criminal activity so that those whistleblowers could be protected, the Member for Siparia, the Member for Naparima, the UNC in this Parliament refused to support that—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—and coming today to tell us about crime. We established an informant fund, not new, but a targeted and improved and increased one throughout all the divisions of the police service to cultivate informants because information is the lifeblood of the intelligence platform and fighting crime. So we will know who is making calls to criminals in the jail and promising them contracts if they win election. Thank God they did not win.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** So you giving them instead.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I giving them? Hear what Siparia asking me.

**Madam Speaker:** Please, forget that and—

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Madam Speaker, thank you very much. The issue of dangerous drugs. I told this country a few years ago a parent, a grieving parent complained to me about what he observed his son going through. It led me to call a member of the police service. A search was done and they found a substance. That substance is now known as ketamine [ke-ta-mine] or ketamine [ke-ta-min]. It was not on the dangerous drugs scheduled. The police confirmed that. I then went to the Minister of Health and after they did all their research, today that is a drug on the dangerous drugs schedule in this country.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And recently the police conducted a raid in the Trincity area and found 12 kilograms of it.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Amphetamines.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And amphetamines as well, to protect our children. We have an organization called the Transnational Organized Crime Unit, busy up and down the place trying to deal with these kinds of matters. Today we have a focus on courier services because we are seeing activity. We know that they are using our legal ports do this business. So we are focusing on improving our border management and control, evidence based approaches is another one, the use of intelligence and technology in analysis and investigations.

Only last night I was at a reception to close off a training programme between some law enforcement personnel from East Midlands in the United Kingdom. This was hosted by the British High Commissioner to Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Harriet Cross, and I would hear from these officers and their

counterparts in Trinidad who they spent the last two years with, how they benefited from the exchange of information and the techniques as we seek to professionalize the police service, further professionalize it, so that it could become more efficient in doing what it has to do, Madam Speaker.

So when the Motion talks about the Government, of course the police service is part of the Executive, if not being part of the Judiciary, if not being part of the Legislature. And that is why a Minister of National Security is accountable to this Parliament for it. But when we talk about who have to fight crime it is not the Government or the Cabinet, it is the police. So what we are doing, Madam Speaker, what we are doing is providing them with the resources and the encouragement and the exposure and the training so that they can do their job. That is what we are doing. And we take a joint agency approach in doing this.

The Member mentioned that five prisoners escaped. Of course that is unfortunate, and he talked about how they come through some roof. But I want to let you know, Madam Speaker, those buildings were there before 2010 and they were there through the period 2010 to 2015 and three months. And the buildings were just as they left them. And I can tell you, they left an unworthy, if you like, Remand Prison in Golden Grove and recently we completed under a contract with a private contractor in this country the repair and refurbishment of the south block of the Golden Grove Remand Prison and the work is now started on the north wing. That is to improve the conditions for the inmates and to cut out the business of slopping out as they called it, using pails and all of that, Madam Speaker. And most of all, or as well, in compliance with the constitutional standards as set by the constitutional court in this country. They did not leave that, we did that. We now have a remand court on the prison compound. They did not do that, we did that.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** So we are encouraging our officers to apply more and more elements of the scientific method. It is for that reason that recently the Ministry of National Security in collaboration with the police service established and had an all-day symposium with international participants dealing with the scientific method and that was only one. Right behind that we had another one sponsored by UNLIREC. And so the story goes, Madam Speaker. It is a work in progress. We are continuing to further enhance and professionalize the entire law enforcement platform so they could do what they want, they must do.

Recently we dismantled the SORT which had some serious issues and challenges, not the least, a lurking issue in respect of two persons who are alleged to have died in their custody, not the least. And that has been—well, a new unit, a National Operations Task Force has now been formed as part of the development of special tactical teams, Madam Speaker, in response to the situation in dealing with crime. Enhanced border control as I said earlier, the purchase of two vessels and when we sought to purchase those vessels the UNC objected to it. They wrote a letter to the Australian Attorney General alleging corruption and they were ignored. So what we on this side see is every time we are trying to fight crime in this country the UNC gets in the way.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And I can tell you as a parliamentarian and a member of the Legislative Review Committee, when we the Government are contemplating bringing laws to respond to the behaviour of criminals, we “doh” only have to consider the criminals, we also have to consider our friends on the other side because we know they are going to object. So we have draft legislation with the criminals in mind and with the UNC in mind.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** How to avoid them. They want everything with special majority and they “doh” want it as the Prime Minister said because they want to support, they want special majority so they could vote against it and coming today to ask us about crime. Madam Speaker, as I said for the third time, “dis country full ah hypocrite” and this Parliament is not exempt.

In respect of violent crime generally hear what the CAPA statistics revealed. In 2019, 1,531 violent crimes reported. In 2020, 1,536 violent crimes and in 2021, 1,166, again a decrease, demonstrating that my friend for Naparima is as wrong as “ah” O.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Full of hype and bluster and provocation and insofar, Madam Speaker, as arrests are concerned, for violent crimes to date 169 persons have been arrested for those, for the last three years inclusive of the period from January to March 2022. There has been an accumulative figure of 4,402 violent crimes and the detection rate has moved in respect of those from 27 per cent to 34.6 per cent. I say congratulations to Trinidad and Tobago Police Service for that.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And we will provide the resources and the directions as we must and all else that we can do so that will continue, Madam Speaker.

I told you a while ago, Madam Speaker, whether it was the Member for Naparima asking us about the anti-gang law. You will recall, Madam Speaker, when I say “you”, in collective perspective, pluralistic application, “you” being a pronoun that has singular and pluralistic application. But, Madam Speaker, the anti-gang law, the UNC in government at a time came to this Parliament we gave them support. When it was time to refurbish the law after its five years with the sunset clause we went to the UNC because by now we were in Government, they

refused. We came back a second time, they refused again. The Attorney General at the time had to water down the provisions and disregard the Bail Act amendments which said that if you were charged under the anti-gang law you will get no bail or bail would be restricted in certain circumstances. The UNC ensured that the criminals did not have to face that. And that is why I, Madam Speaker, and I will take responsibility, I came to the conclusion that there are parliamentarians in this world who will not support certain laws because they are worried about how it will affect them.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And they leave the people to languish. The whistleblower law I told you, recently I as Minister of National Security came to this House and piloted and it is still under the attention of this House, a Bill to deal with integrity testing because we know that there are persons in the law enforcement platform—in fact, I have said since 1995 in this House that a lot that happens cannot happen without the complicity of certain elements of the State. Even what you are seeing now in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, white collar crime, it could not happen without elements of the State complicitous. A lot of corruption that takes place in this country happened with the support of government officials and in some cases former government Ministers. And that is why plenty former government Ministers in front the court and police watching them, today. And we always tell them and I say again today the wheels of justice may turn slowly but they turn.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And as an old police I know, once you commit a crime you cannot un-commit it. So whatever you did, one day, one day there will be a policeman with sufficient time and determination to come after you. And I will tell you on

that score, we realize that there are many crimes, particularly white collar crime that go unattended because the numbers are so great and the limited resources of the police investigative units challenged to deal with it. So this Government has taken the position and I answered a question on Tuesday from an Independent Senator whether the Government is prepared to use the provisions under the SRP Act to hire people with certain skills in forensic accounting, for example, in auditing and that kind of thing, analysis, statistical analysis and those kinds of skill, Madam Speaker, to go into the police service even as SRPs, not to pretend to play hockey and pretend to play football and just give them a salary. The real thing.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** The real thing. Madam Speaker, I will tell you something, I will tell you something, right now we have a project taking place on the Beetham. I got a call yesterday from WASA officials that they are being tormented by certain elements of the community. One of those elements was described in this Parliament by one of my friends on the other as “one ah we soldiers”. And I am aware because I practise law and I sat in a court one time and see a colleague of mine defending that individual, and when I heard the rap sheets, 69 pending matters, 69, and he was described as one of their soldiers on the Beetham. One of those offences for which he was convicted was possession of a firearm. And I can tell you, Madam Speaker, very close to some of my friends, very close.

But, Madam Speaker, the Member for Naparima spoke about preventative issues. I do not know which government could take credit for that more than the People’s National Movement. Madam Speaker, last Sunday, and let me give you one example.

I went to the home of a constituent of my mine, his name is and I am going to put his name on the Parliament record, Wilburn Crichlow, “ah” ordinary,

humble citizen, a CEPEP worker. His wife is a minimum wage earner as well but they are decent and prayerful and hard-working people. And I went to join them in celebration. Their young beautiful daughter, age 20 now, Sachel Crichlow, Madam Speaker, earned herself an open scholarship in natural sciences.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And, Madam Speaker, when I looked and I behold, when I blessed my eyes on that child, cool, calm, well spoken, confident, prayerful, appreciative, close to her family, I saw where the strength of the family is critical. I saw where her own personal ambition and drive and prayerfulness and faithfulness are critical, but I also saw government policy at work.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** The CEPEP was born out of this Government's vision and policy to create employment and take care of the environment. Her father is part of that. And they now occupy a house that they are paying for but it was produced through and under the HDC, Government's housing policy. So wrapped up in the success and the beauty of what I told you I saw with the strength of the family, I saw education policy at work and I told her when she go to execute that open scholarship if she got a first class degree she will get masters and PhD at the expense of the State in good government policy. I told her that. I saw the work of her teachers, I saw good housing policy, I saw employment policy.

Madam Speaker, what I am saying. I am saying, Madam Speaker, that we have an education system here, we have a situation in Trinidad where every individual can go to the highest like Keshorn Walcott in sport, in academics, in business and I am responding to Naparima who talks about preventative. And we have a Ministry of Youth Development and National Service which has a whole lot of programmes, including the homestead programme where we will teach them the



techniques of agriculture and the provide them with state land so that they can do it—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—led by Minister Foster Cummings, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, you have one minute left.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I have one minute left. Madam Speaker, there is so much more to be said, but time does not permit me to say it. So I would conclude, Madam Speaker, by saying that this Motion was based on a false and reckless premise and adequately described on the statistics to be so. I am saying that the UNC can do better, my friend Naparima and his colleagues could do better rather than come here and complain about crime as they try to do in this Motion, but to support the efforts of this Parliament and the people of this country to protect us against those who want to hurt us as criminals. And I am saying, Madam Speaker, we this Government have a strong record of creating opportunities for every single citizen in Trinidad and Tobago and that is the most preventative element. But there are individuals who choose to walk otherwise and we have a restorative and reentry policy en vogue at the prison service to deal with them if that becomes necessary.

Madam Speaker, we will continue to provide the resources to the law enforcement, we will continue to be vigilant and we are confident that we will win this battle, Madam Speaker. We were elected in 2015, we were elected again in 2020 and we expect to be elected again in 2025. The people “doh” want them—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk banging*]

**Madam Speaker:** Time is now spent. Member for Siparia.

**Hon. Members:** [*Continuous desk banging*]

**Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC (Siparia):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Siparia, you have 30 minutes.

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thirty minutes. I thank you very much, Madam. I had not intended to contribute in this debate today but I could not sit there and listen to what I would say untruths being told by the hon. Minister Hinds, the Minister of National Security.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk banging*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:**—without setting the record straight. Because on several points raised by the hon. Minister they were distortions of the truth or they were outright untruths and I will draw that to the attention of this honourable House. But before I do that, Madam, let us recognize that Trinidad and Tobago is under siege, Trinidad and Tobago is under siege due to the incompetence and negligence of the present Government.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** I want to congratulate and endorse the points made by the hon. Member for Naparima in his excellent presentation—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:**—in the debate on the Motion brought by him. I think everyone understands that one of the key functions of any government, one of the key functions, in fact, I would think is the most important function, is the safety and security of its citizens.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** It must be, that must be of the utmost importance, because if you are not secure and safe, if you are dead, you cannot enjoy any other benefit from the State. And therefore it is our view based on the statistics and other points raised by my colleague that this Government has failed in every aspect in keeping—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:**—citizens safe and secure. The Government has created and MP Charles said it, you know, the hon. Member for Naparima said it in his contribution. We are not asking you for a list and a repetition of your list to say you want to do one and you want to do two and you want to do three and you want to do five and it is again in some instances a repetition of promises, PNM promises never materialize.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Coming again today to place a list rather than telling us well, okay, we did this, we did that, we did the other. What are the outcomes, what are the results?

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** So you tell us you did some repairs on the south block of the prison and so on. Was that before the jail break or after the jail break?

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** What have you done after the jail break? I know there was a select committee—there was a jail break during our term. There was a Joint Select Committee set up to look into that matter and they came up with many recommendations. Have you carried out any of those recommendations? Have you done anything about it?—so that we saw the fiasco with the recent jail break. Well, let us move along.

This Government has shown that they just do not care in terms of reducing crime and so on. They have failed the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I saw the Acting Commissioner of Police has been trying his best to down play the reality of the situation but from newspaper reports firsthand accounts, social media and from just one on one talking to people, crime remains a major problem under this

Surge in Criminal Activity  
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar (cont'd)

2022.03.25

Government. People do not feel safe in this country, in their homes or outside of their homes. And this week we saw the Minister of National Security telling us that there was criminal alliance being formed between gangs. Minister, you repeated it today. Where is he?

**Hon. Members:** [*Crosstalk*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Is he here? Talk and left. Okay, that is okay, some of us do it. So you said it today about, where death of a gang leader causing merging among gangsters. Okay, but you know that. So what are you doing about it?

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** It is one thing to come and say, “aye” somebody died or the gangs are merging, what are your plans, what do you hope to do? Nothing, can you tell us about what you will do with this. Likewise you raised several other problems but you will not tell us what you are going to do. You talk about the Stanley John Report, Stanley John Report into what you said criminal—but what are you doing about it?

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** You say we come and cry and complain, why are you complaining? You have a Stanley John Report, spent time and money maybe, what is the Government going to do about that report as it concerns crime? Have you done anything at all? Or is it just like the COVID-19 report that you put a team and you get all these recommendations, nothing is done. Paper on shelf collecting dust.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** So do not come and tell us, complain what, what, what, where and where and then you cannot tell this Parliament or tell this nation

what you will do about it. You talked about legislation, hon. Minister, and I think it is shameful, maybe not for you, but for this Government, that you came in this Parliament and told the Parliament, your Government, yes, your former AG, where is he too? He is not here. Your former AG told this Parliament we know where the gangs are; we know the members, 400 gangs; we know their name; we know their addresses, yes, just pass this law and we are going to pick up everybody. How many did you pick up? How did it help you? And then the untruth that we did not support the anti-gang legislation, totally untrue.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** We gave you that support, we gave you the support to pass the anti-gang legislation. So again you are being untrue and since I am on legislation let me tell you how many pieces of legislation the Opposition gave you support for in the fight against crime but yet still what happens, crime is skyrocketing. So it is not about legislation only and there you go again, blame the UNC, UNC will not support you, will not support your legislation and that is why crime is out of hand, blame us again. No, we are not taking that blame you are to blame—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:**—your Government is to blame. Your Government is to blame. You came here you wanted a special majority Bill passed we gave it to you on the Tax Information Exchange Agreements. You came here, you wanted our support on Income Tax (Amdt.) Act, No. 6 of 2020, we gave you that support. So do not come here and say we are hypocrites because we do not support your legislation and that is why you cannot succeed.

I saw the former AG, a relative of his is saying, oh, he became frustrated because the Opposition will not give him support for the Bills that he drafted. Not

Surge in Criminal Activity  
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar (cont'd)

2022.03.25

true! We gave you support, three, for the Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters, all of these are to do with crimes and white collar crimes, Madam Speaker, so we support you with that, three, four. We supported you with the Copyright (Amdt.) Act, again to deal with infringes of the law and therefore in the help against crime. We gave you support for the Sexual Offences (Amdt.) Act, No. 19 of 2019. Madam Speaker, it really angers me that they will get up time and time again in this Parliament and repeat the same, the same, the same untruths.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** The same. Then we have, I said the Sexual Offences (Amdt.) Bill, No. 19 of 2019. They came and ask for support, special majority, the Anti-Terrorism (Amdt.) Act, No. 13 of 2018. We gave you that support too. Have you found any terrorists yet?

Have you implemented any part of this legislation? No! So do not blame the UNC and the Opposition for doing their job.

**4.00 p.m.**

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Do not blame us. You come, you want to pass the law, we gave you the support. You passed the law and you still have to come here and cry and say it is the UNC blocking you because we are not passing the law. It is your own failure and your own incompetence!

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** That is what it is. We gave you support for the Insurance Act, No. 4 of 2018. We gave you support for other Bills, the Anti-Gang Act. You spoke about it. Let me remind you of the chronology and of what happened. You brought the Act, we said we did not agree with it. Okay? Then it could not have been brought back in that same session. You all remember that. The

truth will always come out, you know. Afterwards, because there was a hue and a cry and we said okay, if this is going to help fight the crime—I wrote to you. I wrote to the Government and I said, “Listen, we will give you the support for two things: one, you can bring it back in the same session”. Bring it back. You brought it back and we gave you the special majority support.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** You tell us you know who they are. Let me repeat that. “We know their names.” How many gangs that they say, 400 whatever? “We know the names of the gang members, we know their addresses, we know where to find them. Just give us this and we will find them and we will lock them up.” So said, not so done. Not done at all.

We gave you the Licensing Committee (Validation) Act, 2018; we gave you the Tax Information Exchange Agreements (United States of America) Act, No. 4 of 2017; and the list goes on, Madam. I have listed here several and I want to talk on other points, but this is just to show that it is totally untrue to say the Opposition is not giving the support for the special majority Bills.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** But if you want to talk about legislation—and legislation is not the cure-all, not a panacea or whatever is the word for dealing with the crime. It is not. It is one part. My colleague MP Charles spoke about it must be a holistic approach, but let us deal with legislation. You promised this country pepper spray legislation. Where is it?

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** All over Trinidad after the death of a daughter of our soil, holding vigils and crying crocodile tears, yes pepper spray, yes pepper spray, where is it? And you know where it is stuck, I am told? And please tell us if

Surge in Criminal Activity  
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar (cont'd)

2022.03.25

that is true. It is stuck—the regulations have been done but I am told it is being stuck in the Ministry of National Security because certain things have to be done there. With respect to the regulations, and the quantities, and the chemicals and all the technicalities, it is stuck there. So I say PNM: promises never materialize. Pepper spray, where is it?

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Talk about legislation again. When that incident happened again with a daughter of our soil, the issues of PH taxis came up. You all remember that? Remember that? They promised PH legislation. Where is it? Where is the PH legislation?

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** You promised as well to deal with issues of a sex offenders registry. Is that operationalized? Is it working? How many people are on that registry? How many? How many?

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Several other pieces of legislation to help crime. We talked about—you talked about—well, we did. We passed the law. My government—our government at that time dealing with the GPS bracelets. Do you remember that? GPS bracelets, what is the status of that? Has one person gotten a GPS bracelet in this country yet, after so many years? And you want to come and tell us it is the UNC not passing law for you. The UNC not supporting. Law is on the books and you are not implementing the law. You are not implementing the law.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** You talked about the statistics not skyrocketing. Well, nothing is further from the truth. I repeat the statistics. I endorse what my



Surge in Criminal Activity  
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar (cont'd)

2022.03.25

colleague MP Charles gave and it is clear that crime is skyrocketing.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** If I believe as you hold yourself out to be that you are a lawyer, I am sure you can do arithmetic and mathematics and you will see clearly that the numbers are skyrocketing when it comes to the statistics dealing with crime. And let me tell you, every time the PNM is in power, every single time the crime starts to go up. Every time. Every time. Why? Why is that?

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Let us look at the stats. You wanted to talk about when we were there. You say they are not skyrocketing but look at what we left you, serious crimes, murders, homicides. The last full year we were there, 403. What happened under your watch? Where is it now? The last full year you were there, 448. Immediately you came into office, 2016, 463; 2017, 494, continued to climb under your watch. Why? Why is that? Why is that? And that is a serious question you have to ask: Why is it under the PNM that crime climbs up and escalates, Madam Speaker? Why? If you could answer that, then you may be able to help solve the problems that we are facing, and let me give you one example. You want to come and tell us here today about some—I do not know who it is you were referring to when you said some Members or Members want to give contracts to people in jail if they win election. That is totally untrue! Totally untrue.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** And if you want to know who funds criminal enterprises, and who funds the criminals in this country, it is not the Partnership, it is not the UNC. I will tell you who they are. It is long known that the PNM cultivates an intimate relationship with criminal elements and I will prove that, Madam. I will prove it.

Surge in Criminal Activity  
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar (cont'd)

2022.03.25

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** From former Prime Minister Manning meeting with so-called community leaders. Do you all remember that? Meeting community leaders to actively providing state funds to them. The evidence is there. Money is provided to so-called community leaders whom everybody knows that is just a euphemism for something else.

In a recent matter the Guardian Media investigated and in 2019 found that near \$6 million given to gang leaders through state contracts by two PNM controlled corporations. And you want to come today and point fingers at us to say “we making deal” with people in jail when this is an investigative report carried in the *Guardian*. I have the citation here recently. So if that is not funding crime, then tell me what is, when you give this \$6 million in state contracts to gang leaders by PNM controlled corporations. Let me quote from that article, Madam:

“Seven reputed gang leaders in north Trinidad have benefited from State contracts worth close to \$6 million in spite of assurances by Government to the contrary.”

In spite of that they were given by PNM corporations. This is in 2019. Continuing the quotation:

“The money was paid to alleged gang leaders based in communities in...Port-of-Spain to Diego Martin areas over the last three years.”—2016, '17, '18, '19.

Three years from '19 go backwards. Continuing the quotation:

“This information”—hear where it comes from, Madam—“is contained in a confidential eight-page Special Branch report prepared in mid-May that was obtained as part of a Guardian Media investigation just a week after Police Commissioner Gary Griffith blamed the state for placing funds in the hands

of gang leaders.”

Who is funding the gang leaders now? Who is funding the gang leaders? And you are so boldfaced—excuse me, Madam—so hypocritical for anyone, anyone—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:**—to say that UNC is promising contracts for people in jail. Can you think about it, Madam, \$6 million? Think of how many guns and drugs that \$6 million would have been spent on; taxpayers’ dollars. Guns brought from that same money paid by the Government money now, you know. This is Government—your money, taxpayers’ dollars, given by this Government. That in my respectful view is funding the criminal elements.

The Minister spoke as well about—and I am trying to respond to what I say are many untruths that he put forward here today—municipal police officers. I mean, how can you really, really—why do you not ask your new Minister of—what is it?—local government or something? I wonder if he even knows that you were telling an untruth when you said that your Government has had 1,400 municipal police officers. Totally untrue. You promised 1,400, but what did you do? So far I am told it is only 300. You promised 1,400. It is only 300 and it does not stop there. It does not stop there. You had 300, you promised 1,400 and yet you are boldfaced enough—excuse my language. It is hypocritical and not true for anyone to come and say 1,400. Three hundred!

**Hon. Members:** [*Sustained desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Boast about something that is not true, and tell me you have these 300. [*Crosstalk*] What I am being told there is no allocation, there are no resources—

**Mr. Imbert:** Standing Order—

**Hon. Members:** What Standing Order?

Surge in Criminal Activity  
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar (cont'd)

2022.03.25

**Mr. Imbert:**—48(4). What's good for the goose is good for the gander. "Hypocritical", you objected to the use of the word. [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Speaker:** I made no ruling that the word "hypocritical" in itself was unparliamentary. I allow it. Please continue in the context it means. Continue, Member for Siparia.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Member:** [*Interruption*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** I cannot see, eh. It has to be bigger. Thank you, Madam Speaker—bigger. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I am saying it is hypocritical for anyone, and in fact they will be guilty of a blatant untruth to say that 1,400 were hired. Our information is—and we are very involved in local government. I have here at least three practitioners, four, who come from out of local government—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:**—that it is only 300. And it does not stop there, Madam. So one thing you had the 300 when you promised 1,400, but on top of that they have no resources, they have no allocations. So what do you do? You just hire 300 people there to do what? Mark time? So do not come and boast about the municipal police, because as I have said before, not true. And then we hear this strange statement which is—sorry, Madam, just checking the time. Again, if I may ask for the clock if possible at all. It is really a strain to look. The other side has the advantage. They have it in front of them. So I think it would—Madam, guide me please. How many more minutes?

**Madam Speaker:** You end at 4.22. It is now 4.12.

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you very much, Madam. Thank you. Let us

come to the—the Minister said it is not for the Government to fight crime. It is not for the Government to fight crime. I started my contribution by saying that the first and foremost, the paramount duty of any government in a civilized democratic state such as we hope we are—I think we are—is the safety and security of its citizens. That is the priority, Madam, and I explained why at the start.

Minister then said we just provide the resources. Well, first of all that is not true. That is another untruth because a lot of vital resources have not been provided one, and two, even when allocated in the budgets each year, they are not released. So you do not really provide the resources that they need. Instead, you are providing resources at 80 million, 35 million, whatever to look for—what they say, looking for ghosts behind every post saying you are tracking down former Ministers and whoever. You see, the intention is clear, you know. The Minister said it here today in whichever words: he will lock up everybody. He wants to talk about people from the Partnership and the UNC, but he will not talk about that the only person charged is one of his Ministers, former Ministers.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Will not tell us that there are still serious questions outstanding with respect to—I am not doing a substantive so, but there are questions outstanding about the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney about some bank account. We have issues dealing with former Minister Dillon. You remember that? Elderly-something abuse. You have the former Darryl Smith. So look, fellas, when you point so, four fingers pointing back at you, you know. And all these name callings, and all these things are not going to help you to fix the crime problem. It will not help you.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** All these blames, it will not help you. So he says

not Government to fight crime, to provide resources. But it is not working if that is your approach. If that is how you see it in terms of solving crime or helping reduce crime, obviously that is not working because the stats show that you are clearly—crime is increasing. So your approach is totally wrong. Your approach is totally wrong. What it is—it is what it is. You are not to go into the TTPS and direct and tell them investigate this one, and investigate that one, and paying millions of dollars to select whom to be investigated. That you should not do! That should be never be done!

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** But what you can do is to provide an enabling environment for the administration of safety and security. How do you do that? In the few minutes I have left I would probably give it to one of my colleagues to deal with that. Thank you.

We have a lot of things we have talked about. We talked about the administration now, Madam. Obviously, what we have is not working. We had suggested on this side what we will do, we split the Ministries. National Security alone is obviously failing on the job, fall down on the job.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** So we have a Ministry of home security which will deal with certain aspects of the job, those on the land. You have a Ministry that will deal with other matters. You will have a Ministry of homeland security, and these are some of the suggestions we had made in the past and I will pass this note to my colleagues given the time constraints.

Let me thank you, Madam, for opening up the restrictions in the Parliament, allowing us to sit together as a community, as a body of the democratic Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and to thank you for relaxing the speaking time. We

became a little accustomed to the 20 minutes and now the 45 minutes gives us more time to expatiate and so and so. Can we thank the Speaker please for these restrictions being lifted?

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** I think it will be in better defence of our security. So we talked about having a Ministry of home affairs dealing primarily with the internal law enforcement and focus on policing. We suggested a Ministry of defence which will be based on the critical need for protection of our borders, illegal entry of drugs, weapons, human trafficking and so on. The Minister spoke about those things, but no solution.

The Minister of defence will be newly established based on new threats and clear and present danger which faces all nations at this time. That Ministry of defence will incorporate the defence force, immigration, customs, and so on, to handle border control. And then we could look at a Ministry dealing with home affairs as I said, TTPS, fire service, police service, disaster preparedness, and then a Ministry of justice. I saw the Prime Minister complaining the other day, they giving all the resources to the Judiciary and justice is so slow, but no, no. Again, it is not just about resources, and again it is not true you are giving them all the resources. You will do as best as you can.

So we had these suggestions. We talked about bail reform. We talked about increasing the age of retirement for the coast guards. These guys are retiring at a relatively young age, whereas in other jurisdictions they increased—I suggested an increase of three years because in other jurisdictions—here I think it is 45 or something. A very low age that they have to go. We suggested that we do some areas with identifying hot zones. We talked about diplomas and undergraduate studies for police officers. These could be done at the Debe Campus. We talked

about the forensics to be done down there as well. We talked about pre-trial detention and bail reform. We talked about so many other approaches. So it is not just about we give them the resources. You have to create the environment within which they can operate more efficiently. You have to give state support to the children of incarcerated persons, persons who are in jail. How will the children live? We have to provide some support of them, and I talked already about the GPS bracelets and so on.

So, Madam, some measures for immediately relief: grant powers of arrest to all members of the defence force to break the monopoly of the TTPS. Let them work together. They can work together. Remember you laughed at us when we had brought a Bill to give them those powers. You called it the soldier. Not the soldier, but you called it the soldier base or something like that. Let us look at that. Zone all high crimes areas and spots and have a dedicated task force commander. Appoint a senior officer as a national security operation commander to plan and coordinate all operations of these zones. Institute metrics for crime reduction which is what my colleague spoke about. Outfit the coast guard so they can be more efficient and, of course, fund them for the fuel and the diesel and so they may need. Establish a national security investigation bureau for investigating national security personnel.

Madam, these are just some. I want to make the point again, I totally endorse and support the Motion brought by my colleague on this issue dealing with crime.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. K. Persad-Bissessar SC:** I thank you very much.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]



**The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I rise today to join this debate that quite ironically started off by the Member for Naparima moving his Motion, not even understanding his own Motion and facing the indignity of having him be ruled irrelevant on a number of times of his own drafted Motion, and it only deteriorated since then. I would like to try to raise the level of conversation, Madam Speaker, through you, to really explain as we as citizens examine this phenomenon of crime. There is not a single civic-minded citizen anywhere in the world who is not concerned about crime, criminality, the effects of crime and criminality on their respective countries. Trinidad and Tobago is no different.

There is no sensible person that would bury his or her head in the sand and pretend that the difficulties of criminality do not exist in Trinidad and Tobago. The question must become and the conversation must be one for us as legislators in this House as to what can we do to be part of the solution, part of the solution and part of the defence against crime, but also how do we respond to crime, and what is it that we can do firstly as elected Members of Parliament, Members of the legislature, to deal with crime and criminality, and that starts with the passage of legislation. Ironically, and once again unfortunately in an attempt to mislead the population, the previous speaker, the Member for Siparia, took the time in a prepared speech for her, to list certain elements of legislation that the Member for Siparia said the UNC Opposition supported the Government over the last seven years with respect to Bills and the passage of legislation to deal with crime.

In case the population is misled by that, the vast majority of Acts that were referred to by the Member for Siparia had to be passed. And I remind the population of in 2016 when the country was on the brink of a disaster and a crisis and we were at

the risk of becoming a de-risked sovereign nation, and that is what the vast majority of the legislation that the Member for Siparia listed that they supported, had to be done. Because at the time the United States of America had said if that legislation was not passed—and I remind the population that the UNC Opposition refused to pass that special majority the first time, pushing us on a brink of crisis. And I ask the Leader of the Opposition whether either herself or her Members had a meeting with the United States Embassy in Trinidad where they were told if the legislation was not passed what would happen to Trinidad and Tobago, and to remind the population it was the FATCA legislation and if that was not passed we would have been de-risked. So they were not supportive of it.

The record shows that initially they did not support it and it is only when the pressure came and the population realized where the UNC had put Trinidad and Tobago, that we would become de-risked which meant parents would not be able to send money for their children at school away, the business community would not be able to pay their US bills away and their suppliers away, credit cards in Trinidad and Tobago would no longer be allowed to be used by the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, then the UNC caved in and had to support the legislation. So to stand here today and list four pieces of legislation that they supported, that are special majority pieces of legislation, in attempt to misled the population to say look, we supported crime-fighting legislation, is wholly incorrect and facetious.

Putting that one aside, we as legislators can pass legislation but today I want to talk about the concept of consequences. Because you see, when I sat in the seat of Minister of National Security it bothered me on a daily and a nightly basis as to how we make Trinidad and Tobago safer. And the concept I want to discuss with the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago today, is that of consequences. Passage of legislation is only one pillar. So we can sit here as 41 elected Members and we

could pass certain legislation. Anti-gang legislation, a lot of hoorah from the other side is being made about that today. After again, the record would show that the Opposition, the UNC Opposition resisted it, allowed it to lapse. The PNM, when in Opposition, not only agreed to support anti-gang legislation, but we also agreed to support amendments to the Bail Act to be tacked on to that anti-gang legislation. So it meant that those who were charged under the anti-gang legislation would be kept incarcerated for a specific period of time to allow the police to build out the evidence.

The point is legislation is only one part of the pillar. In my thinking how to make Trinidad and Tobago safer, and there was a reduction of crime during that period, it became very apparent—and this is a conversation I raised time and time again with my Cabinet colleagues at Cabinet. Trinidad and Tobago is suffering from a lack of consequences for misbehavior, and that is the problem. Legislation is only one pillar. When you examine the criminal justice system and that is what the conservation should be about: How do we improve the criminal justice system? The concept of separation of powers is thrown at you, but we as the legislators pass law. Our responsibility ends there. It is now for somebody to enforce the law. So as the Minister of National Security, working with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, I saw numerous examples including under the anti-gang legislation of them charging persons. One of my colleagues on the other side, I think it was Barataria/San Juan, earlier this week asked again a facetious question: Well, how many people have been convicted under the legislation?—knowing fully well that the Government has no role to play in the conviction.

A conviction, it starts off we pass the legislation. We do the policy, we provide the resources. The next thing that must happen is that the police service will charge persons and that has happened. We have had statistics provided here

time and time again of how many people have been charged under the anti-gang legislation. It is now scores of persons. Scores of persons have been charged under the anti-gang legislation. So they shift the goal post, tell us about convictions. The answer for convictions lies on the prosecutorial arm, the defence arm, but importantly the Judiciary, and that is the part of the conversation I would like to take up here today. Because you see, unless there are consequences for corruption, unless there are consequences for criminal behaviour where people feel the consequences of their wrongdoing, my submission is it will make very little difference, and that is an area that unfortunately, it is very frustrating in Government, you do not have much control over. How do you secure the convictions?

So what we had done as an administration and it has been going on now for years, one of the things in adjusting the criminal justice system, get rid of preliminary enquiries. How many times we have been here in debate to try and abolish preliminary enquiries? And the goal post is always moving for the abolition of preliminary enquiries. And I heard the most absurd submission when I was participating in those discussions once by defence attorneys, “Well, if you get rid of preliminary enquiries, the young attorneys would have no opportunity at Magistrates’ Court to earn a fee on brief and to get experience”. So people with an agenda prevent the abolition of preliminary enquiries, to do what? To earn fees and to frustrate the system? That is the criminal justice system.

Recently—as a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, as an elected Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, a constituency that has unfortunately in it some criminal elements, but the vast majority law-abiding citizens who are affected by that handful, that few, who engage in criminal activity.

**4.30 p.m.**

Recently, a decision was taken by that arm which is the third arm of governance. You have the Legislature, you have the Government, you have the Judiciary and you have separation of powers in between. You want to really deal with crime? All three have to be pulling in the same direction. Recently, we have a decision all the way up to the Court of Appeal. It is now possible to apply for bail when you are on a murder charge. How could you ask the Government, the police service, the law-abiding citizens, the civic-minded citizens to easily accept that now persons who are charged with murder can legitimately apply for bail, something that we have known since the Bail Act has been in place that for the crime of murder, for capital offences, the application for bail was not available? Well, that is changed now and that is the criminal justice system.

And ironically, today in an article, in the *Trinidad Express*, before coming to Parliament, the 25<sup>th</sup> of March today:

“It has happened: Murder accused gets bail”

And this bothers me. It bothers me as an elected Member of Parliament, as a person who has practised in the courts for almost two decades before getting into politics and as a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago. And it goes on:

“For the first time in the history of Trinidad and Tobago a person has been granted bail for murder.

It comes just over a month after the Appeal Court held that Section 5(1) of the Bail Act was unconstitutional as it had removed the jurisdiction of the court to consider bail for those accused of the capital offence.”

And it goes on to say, and ironically:

“On February 17, in a matter brought by former murder accused Akilli Charles, Chief Justice Ivor Archie along with Justices of Appeal Mira-Dean-Armorer and Malcolm Holdip unanimously held that Section 5(1)”—of the

Bail Act—“was unconstitutional, as it breached the doctrine of separation of powers.”

So, we as legislators can pass legislation here which we think is going to improve the criminal justice system, fight crime and criminality, pass it with a special majority but then the concept of separation of powers is breached because there are others who think you all have no say in that. But it is the Government who has the information on criminals through the police service, through the intelligence services. It is the Government who is best placed to assist in the formulation of policy to deal with crime and criminality. This is a live example of us taking decisions, passing legislation in an attempt to fight crime and then it being derailed to an extent.

The issue of consequences not applying in Trinidad and Tobago is a wide-reaching one. You have it as well throughout the whole public service. You have this problem that wrongdoers—and not limited to the public service—wrongdoers, persons who commit—I mean, we have another great example of it in the last two days. Anybody reading the newspapers in the last 24 hours would see a missing Member of Parliament today saying that there is no evidence of wrongdoing when he was a Minister and hundreds of millions of dollars were corruptly syphoned out; \$400 million by a state enterprise spent in the space of between August 2015 and September 2015 and to then stand up and say there is no evidence. Well, I am putting it here once again on the *Hansard*, there is the evidence. In that particular case, there is evidence that contractors are the ones who drafted the Cabinet Minutes, the Cabinet Notes and sent it to the Minister and that Ministry to put before Cabinet to go with the \$400 million of contracts. There is also evidence that shows text messages by that missing Member of Parliament, bring the cheque to Parliament so he could pay contractors and what they do is they use the court

system, which is part of the whole issue, and they delay it, delay it, delay it. But there is also a High Court decision—

**Mr. Lee:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, just seeking clarification from the Minister. Is this matter that he is talking about sub judice? So I raise the Standing Order 49(1). I am asking.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Again, Member, I will give you some leeway.

**Hon. S. Young:** Thank you.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Just be considerate—[*Inaudible*]

**Hon. S. Young:** I was closing it off now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by saying there is a court decision of over 100 pages that determines that there was sufficient evidence of cartel behaviour and corruption. It is just to correct the record to say that there is a pursuit of corruption taking place but again to make the example of a lack of consequences. I go on.

The previous speaker, the hon. Member for Siparia who has left the Chamber now, actually opened up this part of the debate. I was wondering whether to go down this road but she opened it up frontally when the Member for Siparia said a short while ago about PNM contractors and PNM encouraging criminality in the granting of contracts and went on ironically again to read a *Guardian* article, a recent article in 2019, talking about certain corporations and the suggestion that there were criminals getting state contracts. Well, I am disappointed that the Member for Siparia is not here to put this reminder to her and to the Opposition, and I am reading from a *Guardian* article dated Wednesday, October 09, 2013:

“‘Spanish’ Mystery”—by Yvonne Baboolal

And it talks about a Beetham community activist called Kenneth “Spanish” Rodriguez and the HDC and the HDC Managing Director Jearlean John, a name that is familiar with us.

And it goes on to say that:

“Rodriguez featured prominently during a tour of the...”

I am quoting from the *Guardian* article dated the 9<sup>th</sup> of October, 2013:

“Rodriguez featured prominently during a tour of the \$2 million Duncan Street police post project with”—Jearlean—“John, Housing Minister Dr Roodal Moonilal, National Security Minister Gary...”

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(8).

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Overruled.

**Hon. S. Young:** I will repeat it. This is Spanish Rodriguez, this is a *Guardian* article and I am directly referring, not rebutting, referring to what the Member for Siparia said. So:

“Spanish”—“Rodriguez featured prominently during a tour of the \$2 million Duncan Street police post project with”—Jearlean—“John, Housing Minister Dr Roodal Moonilal, National Security Minister Gary Griffith and acting Commissioner of Police Stephen Williams last week Friday.

Rodriguez”—that is “Spanish”—“told the media...that he was the contractor for the project. He met and greeted Moonilal, then the acting prime minister...”—Jearlean—“John and her entourage and escorted to them to the first and second floors of the buildings. Media personnel...”

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(8). The name that is being referred to by the Minister is a Member of the Senate; 48(8).

**Hon. S. Young:** And I am reading an article.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Overruled.

**Hon. S. Young:** Thank you. You see, I am not making this up, I am not creating it. One, it is a fact that it happened, so do not come in here and once again try to mislead the population and play that somehow “yuh holier than thou” when the



Acting Prime Minister Dr. Roodal Moonilal was being escorted in a police post project granted to a gang leader. And that is only one instance.

I also used the opportunity because the Member for Siparia opened it up and talked about—the exact language she used was funding the criminal elements. I want to remind this House that I was before a joint select committee as the Minister of National Security and provided that Joint Select Committee with the evidence of intelligence reports, with respect to Members of Parliament, leaving the Parliament to go to the Hyatt to pay the drinks bill for gangs and gang members; Members of Parliament for the Opposition who are Members of Parliament in the south of Trinidad asking gang leaders from Diego Martin to come to their constituency office. So, do not come here and tell the country that you do not know about funding criminal activities. And that is the problem.

Because, you see, if the legislators are having these direct relationships with money involved, not even the granting of contracts, you know, paying their drinks bill and calling them to their constituency office, if they are having those types of relationships, do not come here and tell the country that you are worried about crime because you are part of the problem.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. S. Young:** The Member for Siparia—again, I have to say maybe because she is reading a prepared speech, did not have put before her about the GPS system, ankle bracelets. The Member for Laventille West as the Minister of National Security stood here in this same booth months ago and provided a report and had a press conference to say that the courts have started making the orders for the use of the GPS, the ankle bracelets, they are being utilized. So to come here and say what has happened with it. The answer is, it has been implemented, there is a whole unit at National Security that are using it, that are following it, that are doing the

tracking at the orders of the court. So, it is happening.

Again, another blatant attempt to mislead the population talking about municipal police. Yes, it was part of the PNM's plans, and it remains part of the PNM's plan in the Government, to ensure that every corporation has 100 municipal police. And I heard the statement with my own ears from the Member for Siparia saying only 300. Again, a complete untruth. There are 726 municipal police and the only thing that stopped and prevented it from continuing was COVID. There were difficulties during the COVID period of recruiting and training. But I am told that there is currently right now a batch of municipal police being trained. So, do not come here and try and create hysteria, do not come here and try and use the cover of crime to mislead the population as is usual. We all know, pepper spray is a great example of us as legislators passing the legislation and waiting for it to be implemented, and that is what is going on. So, again, put the responsibility where the responsibility is due.

PNM creates a culture of relationships with criminals. That was the quotation I took down from the Member for Siparia. And, you know, I am standing here and I am looking across the aisle and recalling those intelligence reports that called the names of persons on the other side who were in deep relationships. I heard the Member for Laventille West—and, unfortunately, the Minister of Public Utilities is not here to talk about the Beetham project. Again, even up to recently, there are suggestions that the discord, the type of behaviour that went on in the Beetham, a small handful of people on that sewerage project and who it was on the other side that was related and encouraging the criminal behaviour. So, if you are encouraging the criminal behaviour, do not come here and try and tell the population that nothing is being done about crime when you are actively encouraging it.

Consequences and the lack of consequences, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the submission and the submission is that we all have a role to play. We have a role to play as legislators, the Government has a role to play in directing policy and resources, which it is doing. There was a lot of hullabaloo made by the Member for Naparima and the Member for Siparia about the prison system and a recent prison break. Every prison break is an unfortunate incident and let us not fool ourselves that that only happens in Trinidad and Tobago.

I remember it was in June or July of 2015, just before a massive prison break where a police officer was killed and that was under the Kamla Persad-Bissessar-led government and then to stand here and talk about the Minister of National Security. In the last seven years, under a PNM administration, there have been three Ministers of National Security, myself included. In a Kamla Persad-Bissessar five-year term, there were six, including one who cannot even leave Trinidad and Tobago to go to the United States because “dey waiting fuh him” in an international criminal ring and let us not forget that.

So, the Member for Siparia who has left the Chamber, her response to crime was to appoint an international criminal as a Minister of National Security and he also acted as Prime Minister. Six Members, six Ministers of National Security. And then to come here today, the hypocrisy of it, a word that seems today to suddenly have a different meaning and say that the Government has been unable to effectively prevent a surge in criminal activity resulting in rapid increases in murders, robberies, home invasions. It is insulting. It is insulting to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago standing out there. What we should be doing is working together to find ways to combat crime and the criminal element, not having certain sitting Members of Parliament deep in relationships with them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I ask at what time my contribution ends?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** You finish at 4.51.

**Hon. S. Young:** Thank you. Neglected prison infrastructure. In the last seven years, decisions were taken at National Security to improve the prison infrastructure and that has been going on. But it has been going at a time when, unfortunately, revenue was lower and money was difficult and not as easy as it was in the past. Again, every time I go to the east of Trinidad and drive pass the traffic lights, it upsets me to see a fence that was put up in 2015 for \$50 million, a fence that surrounds nothing. That \$50 million is exactly—just a bit more we are using, and you heard Minister Hinds say, to finally improve the circumstances at the remand yard in Golden Grove and that is not to be washed aside the way Siparia did. Because I walked in the remand yard a number of times as the Minister and it disturbed me as a citizen to see the way that those inmates were being housed there. And we took a decision and it is being implemented. The first wing has been completed to upgrade remand. As he said, there is videoconferencing there now. The fencing is being improved. The CCTV cameras. The officers were provided with stab vests, with personal firearms.

And what do we have? That again, a former Attorney General of the UNC goes to challenge the “keep and carry” for prison officers. So, let the prison officers remember that, that it is the UNC again who has put prison officers’ lives in jeopardy by challenging their “keep and carry” policy. So, when the Commissioner of Prisons is giving to prison officers, who are not going to be in the prison compound but going to come back for their shift, firearms to carry, it is the UNC who challenged that to make it insecure and to put them at risk. Right? And that is on record. That is decision was given in December last year.

So, do not come here and try and fool the people that you are really concerned about crime, you want to be part of the solution for the reduction of

crime but “all how”, every which way you look, there is an Opposition element undermining the efforts to really combat crime. And then to hear the Member talk about celebrating the capture of the escape prisoners. I do not know where that came from but every—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member, two more minutes.

**Hon. S. Young:** How much, sorry?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Two more minutes.

**Hon. S. Young:**—but every civic-minded citizen had to be have been relieved when the escaped prisoners were caught and they were caught in less than 72 hours, all returned and being charged.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will end on this point. Let us not fool ourselves that there is any one pillar, any one solution to crime and criminality. But I think the record will clearly show and reflect that those on the other side are a part of the problem and not a part of the solution. And to come here, including the Leader of the Opposition, to try and fool the population about, “We supported this piece of legislation,” and 90 per cent of the pieces of legislation, if not 95, that the Member for Siparia quoted they supported as special majority legislation was because they had to because we were about to be de-risked as Trinidad and Tobago. Consequences and until we have the consequences of those who took the \$400 million from EMBD and put it in cartels and corruption, until we have those who are calling prisoners on the inside of the prison, until we have those who are paying the bar bills at Hyatt for criminals—

**Mr. Charles:** [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** One second. No, no, please Member. Not like that. All right? Not like that. Proceed.

**Hon. S. Young:** Thank you. They get uneasy because you see this is the truth. This

is not just the rabble-rousing and reading a speech from the backroom. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to end, my submission to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, through you, is that until there are proper consequences for crime and criminality in Trinidad and Tobago, we have to be part of the problem and it is an all-of-Trinidad and Tobago approach but the UNC Opposition is doing everything they can to undermine Trinidad and Tobago becoming a safer and more secure place.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** And Member, you have 30 minutes.

**Mr. Dinesh Rambally** (*Chaguanas West*): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to start off by saying that at the beginning of the Member for Naparima's moving of this Motion, he did categorically state that it gives him no pleasure to have to bring this Motion in the Parliament today. And I think I know why he said that. And the reason why he would have said it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that there is no satisfaction to be derived by us and we certainly do not derive any satisfaction in the spiralling crime rates. We do not, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I want to give a personal account of something that I have witnessed only yesterday and how I came to experience this particular tragedy, and why I will say that this Motion brought by the Member for Naparima is in fact a timely Motion. So, it does not give us any satisfaction but it is timely because in the interest of the people, we have to raise these issues.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have had, and it is not denied, we have had the most heinous crimes on the ascendancy now and it has been going on for

some time. Yesterday, someone whom I know was shot in the Piarco vicinity and he is a reputable, well-known doubles vendor from central Trinidad selling in Piarco and he was basically plying his trade. He was doing what he is accustomed doing. Yes, it was very early in the morning and he went to sell doubles and in the course of doing that, earning his living, this happened and how I came to know this—I mean, this kind of news, it goes through the media, social media, et cetera. But I also know members of the family and I do not wish to bring them into this debate, but safe to say that having gone there because the wife, the widow, now newly widowed, she has taught my son in primary school and they are also, you know—the school is in my constituency, so there are different links and that is why I attended on the home.

And having attended, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that I pay tribute to them. There was a tremendous amount of composure by family members. But the mother of this person who has died and was murdered, she was indicating that she cannot comprehend what is going on and members of the family were saying that they thought that, you know, at some point, if they doze off to sleep, maybe they will wake up and they will realize that this was but a dream.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, finding yourself in these kinds of circumstances, we do not know—certainly, I do not. I do not know how to begin to even, you know, start giving any kind of solace, giving any kind of comfort. How do we comfort persons like this? And this was just yesterday, a very immediate situation. But my colleagues on this side, they can tell you of different incidents like these which they have found themselves in similar positions with members of their own constituency and this is why we are here to debate this important Motion.

So, I want to say to the Member for Naparima that I support his Motion and it is timely and I too derive no satisfaction in having to debate something like this

but it is necessary. If it is the Government intends to listen to some of the concerns, and as the Member for Naparima has said, if you hear the concerns, maybe you can start acting on them and we can see a turnaround in this spiralling crime.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I get into my contribution, there are a few things that I wish to respond to. And I heard the last Member speak, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, and he was talking about, you know, in response to the Member for Siparia, hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the Opposition, only when it found itself in a position where there was a default position, they had no choice to support legislation, that is when they in fact supported the legislation.

And I want to say that, you know, for the record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not so. And in fact, this Opposition has shown that it will support legislation once it is properly brought, it is proper legislation—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:**—it balances the rights of both sides, it balances the right between the State wanting to seek good governance principles and also the rights of the individual. Once that balance is there and we are satisfied that any encroachment on either side will be properly met. My friend spoke about the separation of powers principle. Once that can be met properly and, you know, we are satisfied remedies will be granted by the court in these sort of incidents, we will support such legislation.

And I think he was talking about Tax Information Exchange Agreement Act, No. 5 of 2020, Income Tax (Amdt.) Act, No. 6 of 2020, Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters Act, No. 7 of 2020, and those were in March of 2020, that period, and may be those are the pieces of legislation that he was referring to.



But there are other special majority Bills passed with Opposition support and these include the Copyright (Amdt.) Act, No. 4 of 2020, the Sexual Offences Act, No. 19 of 2020—

**Hon. Member:** [*Interruption*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:** One was in March as well, 2021. One is June to September 2019.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Members, please.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** The Anti-Terrorism (Amdt.) Act, No. 13 of 2018, debated in July of 2018.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:** And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Anti-Gang Act.

Now, I heard my friend say that, you know, this Anti-Gang, we were hell-bent against it. Again, there were issues that were raised by the Opposition, and I am not seeking to repeat what the Member for Siparia, hon. Leader of the Opposition said, but that Bill having been brought, a position was taken. Once we were satisfied that we were seeing some movement from the Government towards balancing the rights and ensuring that the individual rights were being protected, we gave in and we said, “Okay. We will now have it brought back to the House.” That is what she was pointing out. “Bring it back to the House in the same session and we will support it.” It was passed with a sunset clause, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is the purpose of sunset clauses across the world.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:** That you will then seek to look at the efficacy of that piece of legislation knowing that it could have far-reaching consequences and the rights of individuals and therefore, if you are satisfied that it is basically fulfilling the aim of

the legislation, that you will then say it will be extended. They could not show that it was satisfying the purpose for which it was passed.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:** But that being said, they came and they whittled it down in whatever manner, not that we agreed with it, and they passed it with a simple majority. What has happened with the effectiveness of the Anti-Gang Bill, anti-gang law that exists as passed by them? So, what is this big furore about that the Opposition is not supporting them in fighting crime? That is just crying crocodile tears.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that there is a utopic place that exists in the form or in the vicinity of “Peenay Debal”.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:** And I expect that that person is coming. I expect that person to come here and say “Peenay Debal”, that is where you could pass laws, the Opposition will support everything. They will support everything. They will give you what you want. You could keep people locked away in prison, not having been convicted for time immemorial, and according to you, in “Peenay Debal”, that is where crime will go down because of that. I expect that kind of submission to come here you know, in that utopic world.

**5.00 p.m.**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the record, I love to go Penal/Debe on a Sunday morning and I love my crispy saheena. I love my aloo pies and I love my doubles. But I want to say this debate is a serious one, and even going there, persons have a fear for risk of safety in going to these treasured places to enjoy some fine delicacies. So that is in terms of the legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there were other pieces of legislation which were

passed, which I did not hear the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West refer to today. And I would just say it very quickly, anti-gang, I spoke about that; Interception of Communications (Amdt.) Act, 13 of 2020; miscellaneous provisions. There were so many of the miscellaneous provisions, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A suite of legislation or Bills came under miscellaneous provisions and they were passed. And, therefore, the question we have to ask is I thought the Government would have taken a position if they were going to mount that platform to talk about Bills and legislation, talk about the effectiveness of those pieces of legislation in fighting crime. Because that is what we are ultimately here for. So there is no hoorah, according to the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West about the anti-gang legislation on our side.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not shifting the goal post, according to them. And so when he made reference to the change in bail law, it is somewhat anachronistic. It is an oxymoron to say that we have to bear in mind the separation of powers principles and then seek to condemn us, when it is you have lawyers who are taking positions on behalf of their clients before the courts, in terms of challenging laws. That is what a democracy is.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:** But I want to say in respect of that bail law, the Member for San Fernando West is here, previous Attorney General, and I want to understand what they are trying to pin on us that there is spiralling crime because there has now been a successful challenge against the position that if you are a murder accused, you can apply for bail. That is what the position is.

And the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West “get up, like he so happy he get this *Express* article come through on his phone and oh, this is the first person to come out”. He did not bother to read the conditions, a compendium of

conditions that the courts put on that murder accused. Remember, it is not a murder convict, eh. It is a murder accused. They are entitled to go. Thanks to lawyers' jobs and thanks to the quality legal manoeuvring. They are entitled to do that, in the interest of democracy. Thanks to them that you have a position that if you are accused, not convicted, if you are accused, you can go before the court and apply. There is no guarantee that you will get it. There are judicial principles for centuries, you know. UNC did not invent this. For centuries, these principles have been decided and they have been accumulated in something called the common law. And this common law principles, is what applies.

So what you have is a position where a person can go and apply for bail and the courts will determine whether you are entitled to it. And if they deem that you are entitled to it and they decide they will give you bail, as in this particular case, which the Member prior to me, conveniently left out—they gave a compendium of conditions. You mix matters and you breach any one of those conditions, it is right back in prison.

Unless the Government is prepared, as I see they have been doing in previous speakers, throwing their hands up and say: "Aye, de roof going tuh blow off with ah lit tornado wind and people going to break out and we cannot depend on that", that is something else. But as far as I am aware, the law continues to guarantee people's rights and that is what we are about on this side. And we are not saying that everybody who is a murder accused must be roaming around free. Nobody on this side ever said that, or any lawyer that I know of ever submitted that before the courts. It is a matter that they are entitled to apply for bail. It is just that simple.

And if it is, according to this *Express* report and the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, is of the view

that something is wrong, is that he is saying that for the length of time that that law has been in place where you could not apply for it, what period is he talking about? Because crime has been spiraling out of control. This is only now, today. Only today, as a result of court proceedings and a successful challenge, this is the first person who got bail, murder accused, and conditions attached. So what was the cause for the time period that has gone by over the years that caused the spiral in crime? Nobody was being allowed to apply and to come out on bail, if they were murder accused. So what hypocrisy is this?

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:** But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on that note, I want to define what is a hypocrite. I want to define what is a hypocrite. You know what is hypocrisy and what is a hypocrite? It is a person saying that they will support procurement legislation and when it is passed they come and say they gutting that legislation. That is hypocrites.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Hypocrisy is when you come here and you are talking about Stanley John Report and asking the Opposition to act on it when you did not have the gall to come in the House and lay the Stanley John Report for everybody to see.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:** That is hypocrisy. And you have a Minister of National Security come here and shouting, shouting, war. He shouting war. It was a war of words. I do not know who he was talking to. The man shout from beginning to end.

[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** You did not hear Naparima when he was shouting?

**Mr. D. Rambally:** No, Naparima was not shouting. The Member for Naparima was passionate.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Members, Members. Again, hon. Member, address the Chair please. Address the Chair.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Yes. Sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know what hypocrisy is? Hypocrisy is coming to say do not look at the results. We have are a remand court. This is first time, according to the Ministry of National Security, we have a remand court. Hypocrisy is saying that that is on the compound of the prison but you cannot tell us how many people have been convicted. That is hypocrisy. **Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know the substantive speaker allowed this hypocrite word to be used. I do not know in this House—yes, Minister of Finance, I know you are a little confused about that, but that was cleared up.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, hypocrisy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is when you come here and you throw your arms and your hands up in the air and you basically absolve all responsibility and you throw the Police Service Commission under the bus and the different service commissions.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:** That is hypocrisy. Hypocrisy and being a hypocrite, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is when you come here and we are talking about broken promises. Hon. Leader of the Opposition, Member for Siparia spoke about this. You promised 100 municipal officers, 100 per corporation, so we should have 1,400. She indicated that only 300 were appointed. According to the PNM's promise, you know, and then the Minister comes and says, no it is 726.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us define what is hypocrisy. There were 426 municipal officers, a promise was made to take that up to 1,400. They added 300 and that is why they have 726.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:** So hypocrisy is saying that we “doh know wha we talking about”. When we say you only appointed 300, you only appointed 300. There was 426 already in the system. That is 726. So where is the 1,400? We are entitled on this side to raise that. Are we serious about fighting crime, or we want to be hypocritical about crime? That is hypocrisy and we are talking about hypocrites. Now, I know they have an obsession on that side to talk about laying charges and calling people's names on this side. And it goes on, even the Minister of National Security. If I could have charged and convict I would have done it. And that is why they cannot solve crime.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:** You have a previous Commissioner of Police saying that none other than the Prime Minister was seeking to interfere and influence with his position, an independent position, to take positions—

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Standing Order 48(6) please.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member, I will have to uphold this particular one. Again, move on to another point please.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are seeking to define hypocrite but I will move on please.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Please, I can hear. You do not need to answer. I can hear. Proceed to another point.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a lot more I want to say about that but hopefully I will get to it. Now, I am hearing some comments coming from the other side. I want to make my submission here. I did not say anything with others. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to make my submission here. If there is a valid objection stand on the Standing

Orders and I will give way, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not know what hypocrisy is this.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, I have so ruled. No need to reiterate.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Thank you. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we talk about statistics, I heard some statistics being waved. As I said it was a real shouting match by the Minister of National Security. But I just want to say very quickly, because I am told I only have 10 minutes remaining. Mr. Deputy Speaker, would I be allowed to have the time extended to 45 minutes? So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about murders between the period 2020, 2021, 2022. And Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a reason why I chose that. This is in direct answer to the Minister of National Security. So I understand the debate is not about him, but in as much as he has raised it, I want him to go back and look at the statistics under him. And what I want to say is that there has been a 50 per cent increase in murders for the similar period, a 94 per cent increase in fraud offences, a 47 per cent increase in woundings and shootings, 56 per cent increase in kidnappings. I am talking about 2020, July 2020 coming up, and we are in March 2022; 41 per cent increase in murder of our elderly; at least 97 per cent larcenies of a dwelling house; 1,072 burglaries and break-ins; 20 business places were robbed. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you did not hear any decrease. I do not think anybody mistook what I was saying and heard the word decrease. They were all increases. So I do not know what statistics he is quoting from. But I would suggest that he goes back and look at wherever he is getting his information from. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is in terms of the statistics.

Now, I want to say that in 2015, and this is important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in August 2015—Mr. Deputy Speaker, with your permission, I want to show again, what is hypocrisy and I want to show the meaning of who is a hypocrite. We had a



statement, and these are very important words you know. I took it seriously. I still do. The yardstick we will use to measure our success in crime fighting is how you feel about your security. I treat those words very, very important. They are very important. Those words were uttered seven years ago, none other than by our hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Keith Rowley.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member, just in your preamble before that—

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Yes.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:**—you were saying you will identify who is a hypocrite. So again, I need—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. D. Rambally:** No.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:**—you to retract that statement.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hold on.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Yes.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I need you to retract that statement and move on.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** I retract.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Listen, no. I need you to retract the statement, based on what you said prior to the statement you made just now.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I said who is a hypocrite, I withdraw that outright.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** And I need you to withdraw the last statement also.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Which is?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I need you to—

**Mr. D. Rambally:** I will define who is a hypocrite, I withdraw that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I need no assistance, Tabaquite. I need no assistance.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** I withdraw the statement.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, proceed.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** I thought I had said, I want to say I am saying it now. I am defining what is a hypocrite.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Please, let us not go down that road. I have ruled. Naparima, I need no assistance.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I abide by the ruling of the Chair and I withdraw that statement.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** And you proceed.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Thank you. Now, and I was speaking about the words that were uttered in 2015. What you have now—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member, Member, hold on one sec.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Sorry?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** You do not need to repeat anything with regard to it.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** That is fine, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I take your guidance. I am moving along. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to have my full time please. Now, if this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the Prime Minister's—and this is the head of the National Security Council, this is the head of the Government. This Motion is about the Government. If that is the Government's own yardstick, they cannot take that from anywhere else. This is coming from the top, and that is the Government's yardstick. Then what are we faced with later? That was in August of 2015. I am talking about now, when we think about what is going on now, what are the statements that we are hearing now, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

And this is where I am saying that you have a position being taken where none other than the Minister of National Security, taking the position, when called out by one Mr. Fazeer Mohammed, who is a respected journalist, a sports commentator, a sports analyst, and a morning show programme host, and this is

what he had to say on the failure to keep people safe. Minister Mr. Hinds, in his, I must say characteristic, brazen, bold and arrogant manner, this is what he said: “No! My duty is not to ensure that people feel safe and secure.” So you have a Prime Minister saying what is the yardstick, and many years later now, almost seven years later, you have the Minister saying something different.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Yes, please.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Again, we spoke about, and a decision was made on that statement that was made some time ago by the hon. Prime Minister, and I do not want it referenced to anything based on the topic that you are on of hypocrisy. I am not going to get up on my legs again to talk about that particular aspect.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, respectfully you made me withdraw the hypocrisy already. So I am just moving on with the debate.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** But you are making reference on the same particular individual—

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Yes.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:**—as you go along.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am showing that if we are serious about fighting crime, this Motion is about Government. How can have the head of the Government, the head of the National Security Council saying one thing as being the approach, or the standard, the yardstick by which we must look at crime, and then years later, when crime is spiralling out of control, suddenly we have a different standard? That is all I am saying.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Police Service Commission. How much time do I have again, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Just about four minutes.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Four minutes. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about Police Service Commission a little bit. I do not have much time. I really wanted to touch on human trafficking, but I will, maybe in another debate. For the purposes of this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that when we look at the Police Service Commission, I want to briefly touch on the implication of not having installed a substantive Commissioner of Police without which, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the potential for a further deterioration in the crime situation in this country exists. That is what we are dealing with here. So I do not want to go into debate on the Police Service Commission itself and how it was dismantled and all that went wrong, but I want to say that where the country has seen, we are talking about crime. The elements in this country are not only law-abiding. They are the criminal elements as well. And so where they see that such an interference, or however they perceive it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they see something taking place, which led to the dismantling of the substantive Commissioner of Police. What signal are we sending to the criminal elements?

I heard the previous Member talk about consequences; the consequences of what has happened between July or August 2021, to now. This is what we are reaping here now, the consequences of those actions, which led to the total dismantling of a Police Service Commission, the removal of a substantive Commissioner of Police, and this is what we have to deal with now, numbers that we have no pleasure in reciting in this Chamber, but numbers which are real and which we have to grapple with.

So I want to say that it, in effect, leads to a headless, Member for Naparima has often said, rudderless police service. And this is important because we have just witnessed one of the darkest episodes in this country's history that has resulted

in where we are today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is unfortunate that I do not have time to get into it. I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I seek to conclude, that I categorically support the Motion that Member of Parliament for Naparima has brought before this House in the interest of the people of this country. Mr. Deputy Speaker, having listened to him pilot this Motion I, Member for Chaguanas West, I am overwhelmingly convinced that the Minister of National Security must do the right thing, and we are talking about under the Motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are talking about a Motion to resolve that this House reprimand this Government for its failure to effectively prevent the surge in criminal activity in this country. And I am saying that the ultimate way to reprimand this Government is to have the Minister of National Security resign or fired and this Government call an immediate election, because that is the ultimate reprimand that will satisfy this situation.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we are talking about the rights and the interests of the people, we must abide and rule by the law of the people, by the rights of the people, by the wishes of the people. I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Excuse, hon. Member, please. I recognize the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo, and you have 30 minutes.

**The Minister of Youth Development and National Service (Hon. Foster Cummings):** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Again, hon. Members, first of all, I would not entertain any—well first of all, no disruptions are to be entertained and worse yet if you are not sitting in your particular parliamentary seat. Right? So please Members. Go

ahead, Member.

**Hon. F. Cummings:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I join this debate on this Motion to express my absolute disagreement with the contents of this Motion, and to say that we will demonstrate, during the course of this debate, the Government's continued vigour and commitment to create a safe space for all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Cummings:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government views with concern the crime levels in Trinidad and Tobago, and we take careful note of the number of young persons who in one way or another have become involved in criminal conduct.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, crime inflicts hurt and distress on all our citizens and this Government will continue to implement preventive measures and bring about the required legislation to the Parliament to combat the scourge of gang activity, related illegal activity involving drugs, robbery, murder, and other serious crimes.

This work is a whole of government approach, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is an approach involving the work of several Ministries including national security, the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, the Ministries of: Education, Youth Development and National Service, Social Development and Family Services, Child and Gender Affairs, Community Development and Sport and even the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, to name a few.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in recognition of that fact, we all as citizens have a role to play in crime prevention. It is not only the role of the Government. It is not only the role of Government MPs, but it would be interesting for the Members opposite to note that it also involves the Members of the Opposition. All responsible citizens of Trinidad and Tobago should do their part in terms of crime prevention,

Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Cummings:** This is not about scoring cheap political points. The enemy does not reside within these walls. The enemy in this matter involves the criminal elements within the society, and I dare say I would hope that we do not have any of those elements within the confines of these walls.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in keeping with good governance and out of concern for over 500,000 young people, established the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service. And in speaking on this Motion that seeks to suggest, as the mover of the Motion did, that the Government is not proactive in putting measures in place to prevent criminal behaviour, and in suggesting that the Government is only focused on preventative measures, it is my intention, during my contribution, to demonstrate the whole of government approach and in particular the work that is being conducted by the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service with regard to treating with the development of our young people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Ministry, a new Ministry as established by the Prime Minister, is charged with developing and implementing programmes and activities towards the holistic development of our young people, created an environment and created opportunities to allow them to realize their fullest potential and to live a life away from criminal behaviour, to become productive members of society and contributing to our sustainable development, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As part of this whole of government approach, the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service will implement the following specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely programmes. That is the SMART term used by the mover of

the Motion. We have kicked off works for the refurbishment of the St. Michael's School for Boys, which will cater for children in need of supervision or otherwise CHINS, or who are wards of the State and will offer services focused on restorative justice which, with the emphasis on rehabilitation on young offenders, offering them an opportunity to take responsibility for their actions, and at the same time making available training in areas of technical/vocational learning, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In addition, training in academics and preparing them for CSEC examinations. While this facility will focus on rehabilitation of young men, we will undertake, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to introduce a similar facility for young women in the not too distant future. That is your proactive Government at work, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Cummings:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, in keeping with our thrust towards youth development, we will reintroduce the youth camps throughout Trinidad and Tobago. That is the youth apprenticeship and development centres. And these centres are geared towards residential learning in technical and vocational disciplines. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will, in short order, refurbish and reintroduce the Chatham Youth Camp in Point Fortin. It is the Government's intention to reintroduce and develop the Persto Praesto Youth Camp in Freeport. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure the public will be delighted to know that the El Dorado Camp for Girls will be reintroduced very soon.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Cummings:** It is also the Government's intention to repurpose the Chaguaramas Convention Centre as a youth development and apprenticeship centre. We will construct in the—Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know I am still



flabbergasted as to how Couva South became the flagship speaker for the UNC. I may not have agreed with everything that Chaguanas West said but, certainly, that might be a choice that the Opposition Leader should consider.

We will construct a flagship facility at Wallerfield, that will be a co-ed residential facility and accommodate both age categories 15 to 18 and 19 to 25, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Cummings:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, earlier this week I met with the Chief Secretary and members of the Executive Council of the THA to discuss the construction of a new youth camp at Mount St. George in Tobago. That is development, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**5.30 p.m.**

In addition, we will as well expand our suite of nonresidential youth development centres, which will offer similar technical/vocational programmes at the community level. We now have centres at California, St. James, Los Bajos, Malick, Basilon Street, and Laventille, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In addition to these centres that cater—and I intend it to provide safe place spaces for our young people and for the development of our young people. The Government will modernize the existing facilities, and in addition, construct 14 new facilities at various locations throughout Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We will as well collaborate with the following agencies to facilitate training and development of our young people: YTEPP; NESC; UTT; MIC; CARIRI; University of the West Indies—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:**—Youth Business Trinidad and Tobago; GNU of the UN;

LSA; the Tobago House of Assembly; the National Youth Council; the Children's Authority; NEDCO; the Agricultural Development Bank; the On The Job Training Programme, to name a few, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** In keeping with this Government's thrust, the Government appointed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a Policy Advisory Committee to develop a new curriculum and management model for our youth trading and apprenticeship centres. And all of these agencies, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will of course contribute to the development of our young people.

In disagreeing with this Motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we continue to introduce robust programmes for the development of our young people, all 500,000 of them, no matter where they are in Trinidad and Tobago, be it Laventille, Morvant, La Brea, Point Fortin, Siparia, Couva, Chaguanas, Barrackpore, it does not matter.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** We are here to represent all of the young people of this country. And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Motion speaks about not taking proactive action. This Government will introduce agriculture as a key career path for our young people.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** In so doing, we recently launched the Youth Agricultural Homestead Programme. It is a programme that will allow our young people with the interest in agriculture, to access training and to access land, to become 21<sup>st</sup> Century agro-entrepreneurs. Every time the UNC hears about land, they get very antsy, and start to make all sort of spurious allegations. I want to tell them, if you have allegation to make take it to the police if you have facts.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** Other than that, take it to the Lord in prayer. The Youth Agricultural Homestead Programme, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will introduce 200 trained agro professionals to our improved agricultural sector annually over the next three years. I am sure that is welcomed news for the Member for Couva South.

In addition to these programmes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have the national service programmes. Cabinet has appointed a committee chaired by Dr. Ruby Alleyne to develop a comprehensive voluntary national service programme. It will be, I am certain, good news to Trinidad and Tobago to learn that the Government have decided to repurpose the former Petrotrin facility at Beach Camp in Palo Seco as a modern state of the art national service complex, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** This service complex would be operated by the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service in conjunction with the military, through the Specialized Youth Services Programme to rehabilitate and to empower our young people through positive behaviour change systems, while increasing their academic and vocational qualifications with an introduction to entrepreneurial development as a component.

We will also refurbish the old teachers college at Mausica as another national service complex, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Programmes such as MiLAT, MYPART, and CCC, which were mentioned by the mover of the Motion, will form part of the programming at these facilities and with the full involvement of the military. These—contrary to the statement made by the mover of the Motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these programmes will be expanded and each complex will house in excess of 500 cadets, Mr. Deputy Speaker, both male and female.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have also expanded the capacity of our transition homes to enable our young people leaving community residences when they attain the age of 18 years to transition to adulthood in an enabling environment with the necessary support that facilitates their growth and development and prepares them for independent living.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have decided to expand the capacity of the transition home at St. Madeleine and to triple the intake of that the home for boys in St. Madeleine. We do not discriminate. Wherever these facilities exist throughout Trinidad and Tobago, the Government will develop and expand them to the benefit of all our young people throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government has expanded the capacity at the Josephine Shaw Transition Home in Port of Spain for young women. We will soon commission this new facility at that location. I visited that facility only last week and the contractor will soon hand over that facility to the Government. All of this as a whole of government approach designed to offer alternatives to our young people and steer them away from a life of crime, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We will as well repurpose buildings at Sevilla in Couva to accommodate a transition home for women. I am certain that the Member of Parliament for that district will be pleased to know that the Government will as well pay close attention to the development of our young people in that district.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that what I have described in my contribution constitute just a fraction of the work that the Government is committed to doing throughout all of the Ministries and Departments falling under our purview. And what I am outlining is just the work of the Youth Development Ministry. Some of the other programmes I can share, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would be the Youth Business Hubs, a programme designed to encourage micro-entrepreneurship, and

therefore in our visit to Tobago earlier this week, we were able to view some of the micro-entrepreneurship centres established by the Tobago House of Assembly in Tobago. And I dare say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were quite impressed by what we saw. I met several young people who have ventured into businesses. One young man just 21 years old operating a very successful business, a lot of the other entrepreneurs. And our youth business hub as mentioned in the budget by the Minister of Finance, will certainly take the model of a micro-entrepreneurship centre as exists in our sister isle in Tobago.

You would be pleased to know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in addition to that development the Government will as well establish youth business parks to encourage our young people to get involved with areas of agro-processing and light manufacturing. And that programme is intended to be rolled out during this fiscal year.

In addition, you would know that we already launched the Youth Agro-Incentive Grants and that programme has been well and oversubscribed by young people who wish to get involved in agriculture. I can tell you for that for the YAPP programme that we launched on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, applications closed yesterday and we have received approximately 1,200 applications from young people desirous of expanding their agricultural pursuits.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in addition, we will in collaboration with CARIRI and the Ministry of Planning and Development, establish a youth business incubator to assist those young persons who would have established their business and require assistance in making sure that it is a success. And that work will be done by NEDCO that falls under the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service. You know that we have a very successful National Youth Awards programme, and we will continue in our recognition of our outstanding youths, because, Mr. Deputy

Speaker, we have so many examples in this country of young people who are passionate, educated, bright, and promising, and who will serve as flagbearers, and as leaders in the community for those other young people who need that light to follow. And the Government is intent on nurturing that talent, and expressing, and showcasing that talent throughout the country and the region, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker, in addition, several mentorship programmes are being rolled out at our non-residential youth development centres.

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** I wish to indicate that one programme that we are very proud of is the AMPLIFY programme, which is a programme in music production and life skills. So many of our young people I refer to the talent that exists among our young people. So many of our young people have enrolled in this programme, and in partnership with corporate Trinidad and Tobago we expect that the successes that come from this programme with the uptake in the private sector from a training programme like this will be quite significant.

An ALLSET Programme: We hear the complaint all the time from people going into communities, from Members of Parliament, from councillors at the local government level, of the many young people, in particular young men so the speak, on the blocks within various communities with not attending to their own and personal development. And therefore, the Government has launched a programme, ALLSET, which is an Alternative Learning and Life Skill Enhancement Training Programme. And in conjunction with NESC, the Government will offer a programme in heavy equipment operations. I was so pleased to visit the execution of this programme and see a lot of the young men who traditionally may not have been involved in any productive activity, taking the time off to equip themselves and to skill themselves in heavy equipment operations. And so, Madam Speaker,

these young people now have hope.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** They could easily have listened to Members of the Opposition that the sky has fallen in on Chicken Licken's head and all is at distress in Trinidad and Tobago. But with a Government that is responsible, and led by a responsible Prime Minister, and a Cabinet that cares about the people of Trinidad and Tobago, we are determined to roll out programmes where they have hope, where they have access, and where they could work towards their overall and holistic development.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** In addition, Madam Speaker, we have introduced programmes in coding, mobile application development, and Web design. And we do this in conjunction with the MIC, moving towards a technology driven society because we must keep in tune with international developments. Our young people—you know we had, Madam Speaker, in InTech Park, which was a facility designed to make Trinidad and Tobago the leading technologically driven economy this part of the western hemisphere. And as time would have it, the UNC came into government and that programme of course, like many others, suffered at the sword of the UNC.

Madam Speaker, the common word used in this debate somebody tried to give us a definition for it earlier on, and they seemed to like the word. But how can you—I am not even going to mention it—how can you come to this Parliament with a Motion that suggests that this Government is doing nothing about crime prevention? You think crime prevention is only the policing? You shut down all the youth camps when you had the opportunity.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** You closed, you closed NESC in Point Fortin, and in La Brea,

and in Palo Seco. You shut down opportunities for the training and development of our young people. And therefore, leaving them without that opportunity what did you expect? We are now reaping the harvest of your incompetence.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** How can you come to this Parliament and talk about crime prevention when the Government—the Patrick Manning-led administration, secured custom built OPVs to protect our port, to protect our borders, to prevent the gun running to prevent the cocaine coming and the guns that come with it, and to secure our borders, and immediately you came to office you scrap the project.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** And then when the government, this Government, entered into an arrangement with the Australian government to make sure that we could provide vessels to patrol the borders, you went and you wrote to the AG in Australia, trying to sabotage the efforts of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. And so when we say that is there is a level of hypocrisy coming from certain quarters, we know what we are talking about.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** Madam Speaker, when we say that there is a lack of patriotism on the other side; we know what we are talking about.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** At every turn, you seek to paint Trinidad and Tobago in a way and in a manner as though you are not a citizen yourself.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** Any self-respecting citizen will be proud to showcase their country as a place where you want to invite every other citizen from outside of this country. Yet, you feel pride; you take pride in painting your country as a place



where nobody should come. You want crime on the front pages. You want to say to the world that Trinidad is a place riddled with crime. And then you come here and you refuse to support legislation designed to improve our circumstances.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** We are not asleep, the citizens are not asleep and they pay close attention. The Member for Siparia woke up today.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** And it is not the norm for us to have the benefit of her company.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** But what happened, Madam Speaker, is in that in 2010 the advisors of the UNC told them that crime was a hot topic, that tall buildings was a hot topic, and that property tax was a hot topic. So they held on to that as their campaign strategy and somehow they ended up in government. Having been placed back where they belong in Opposition for not one term, but two, one after the next—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:**—it appears that they have hired the same consultant again. So every time they come to this Parliament is crime, is crime, is crime, is property tax, is property tax, is property tax. Well, they “doh” have no buildings to talk about.

And the point is, Madam Speaker, that no matter what they do, the people of Trinidad and Tobago will not forget the way you governed Trinidad and Tobago between 2010 and 2015.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** And I dare say, I dare say, you will not in any time soon see the corridors of power in this country again.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** Our focus, Madam Speaker, is on the development of all our people, but we will place particular focus on the development of our young people. Young people are affected by violent crimes, yes; some as victims, and I dare say some as perpetrators. But to combat the effects of crime and what it inflicts on the economic and social structures of our society, the Government, through a dynamic driven and capable team of competent professionals across Ministries, and led by the most experienced Member of this House, the hon. Keith Christopher Rowley—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:**—has strategically implemented and continues to implement specific preventative programmes utilizing a whole of government approach as I said earlier, Madam Speaker, to rehabilitate and to redirect our young people away from a life of crime, gangs, and drugs, and to transform them into productive and positive members of our society.

We will continue to implement programmes in conjunction with the military through our Specialized Youth Services Programmes as we steer the course in addressing the rise in crime perpetrated by some of our young men and women. As well, we will deal with in a frontal way the question of unemployment and a lack of patriotism displayed by some of our young people. But I dare say, Madam Speaker, that the vast majority of our young people, the vast majority of our citizens, are law-abiding and God-fearing people.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon F. Cummings:** And we will continue to raise with pride the flag of Trinidad and Tobago. We will continue to sing with pride that every creed and race finds an equal place in this country. We will not discriminate, and we will govern to the benefit of all our citizens. I thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Ms. Anita Haynes (Tabaquite):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to join in this very important debate as the Opposition brings in focus the safety and security of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. I would firstly like to thank the Member for Naparima for his foresight in bringing a Motion that deals with a very critical matter that is facing the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, I have written many speeches in my lifetime, many, many speeches. And I just listened to my colleague from La Horquetta/Talparo and in his contribution here today to this Motion, I think that particular speech was misplaced, because as I listened that sounded more like a campaign speech than a response to this Motion here today.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Ms. A. Haynes:** And if I have my math correct, Madam Speaker, if I have my math correct we are a few years away from a general election. So one could only infer what the Member may be campaigning for here today with that speech. Because, Madam Speaker, as a response to this Motion there were a lot of what we will do, what we intend to do. And this Motion is meant to bring into focus what has not been done to create the situation that we are facing here today, Madam Speaker. And so as I say, while we appreciate the sentiments, and we appreciate the patriotism, and we appreciate the appeal, it was not the speech for here today on this platform, Madam Speaker.

But I want to firstly deal with the Minister of National Security, because as we prepared for this debate knowing the seriousness, knowing the sentiments that the people of Trinidad and Tobago have been expressing time and time again about

the fact that they do not feel safe in their country, in their homes at any point in time. The Minister of National Security has failed on every occasion when he has gotten a chance to report to the people of this nation to make any sense here today. Madam Speaker, that contribution by the Minister of National Security in response to the Member for Naparima, he was unprepared, he was unimpressive—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Ms. A. Haynes:**—Madam Speaker, and I could feel, I could feel the pain of the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West when he had to try to come back here to course correct for the Minister just before him. I mean, Madam Speaker, people—as the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo rightfully said—people are looking on. This is televised, it is on YouTube, you could clip it, you could play it over. And that is how you come to defend not just your record, but the Government's record? And, Madam Speaker, that contribution today showed all of us in this House exactly why we are in the problem that we are in today.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Ms. A. Haynes:** Because crime is a serious problem and it is a problem that has so many elements to it, but it requires serious solutions, and most importantly, it requires as serious person at the helm and we do not have that here today. And so, Madam Speaker, the Minister in his contribution spoke —could not address what the Member for Naparima said about the absence of data and the requirements of having proper data for proper policy making.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Ms. A. Haynes:** And I know that because when you try to go through all of the “ole” talk and noise that you were hearing, the Minister kept circling back to legislation, and that they are bringing legislations, and they have to keep the criminals in mind when you are bringing legislation, and then he went onto his

usual political picong. Madam Speaker, I had to sit there and think, but the common sense has to be very absent from that side. Which criminal, Madam Speaker, sits down and says, “You know what, that is against the law, so I cannot do it.” That is the definition of a criminal that they are breaking the law. So you feel they care what legislation we pass here, and when we pass it, and how we pass it? They do not care.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Ms. A. Haynes:** Right. And so that is why when the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries had to come to try to save face, because I am sure the Minister recognized the egg on the Government’s face after their first responder, to say, “Well, it is about consequences.” It is about—that there not being consequences for action and for criminal activity. He is very correct. The problem is the Minister charged with responsibility for security did not know that basic point. He did not understand that criminals do not care about laws. They do not.

And so, Madam Speaker, to come here and to say—because after of Minister of National Security spoke it appeared to me that the chief policy of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as they are today, to treat with crime and criminality is on one hand to talk about a legislative aim which we know has failed, and on the other hand and to blame everything else under the sun.

And so when we talk about—as I heard the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo come in to talk about a whole of government approach and the need for other elements to take place, and crime prevention, you are now dealing with the fact that their main responder, the person with the responsibility for national security, dismissed all of that, dismissed all of that outright in his contribution. And anybody who, anybody who had the stomach to listen for the entire 45 minutes could tell, could tell that it was—there was just no forethought,

no thought about the citizens, what they would be listening to.

I mean, imagine in talking about resourcing the police service and that in stating that his responsibility as Minister is to provide resources to the TTPS, and that they are going to ensure that they are well resourced. The Minister went on to congratulate the TTPS in the same speech that he try to throw the TTPS under the bus by saying they are responsible for enforcement so if you are seeing a problem is the TTPS. But he went on to congratulate the TTPS for work done. So you seeing the confusion.

But the fact is, if you spoke to members of the TTPS Minister, they do not want your congratulations, they want their wage negotiations. Right.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Ms. A. Haynes:** So when you come and you say that that is their job, that is the work that they are doing, well do not pay them from 2013 salaries, that you recognize it is 2022 and they also have lives, and therefore, stop with the congratulations, start to mind your business as the Minister of National Security and figure out what it is you really ought to be doing.

**6.00 p.m.**

Now, my favourite part of the Minister of National Security's speech today, his response today, was when he congratulated the young Ms. Crichlow from his constituency who received the open scholarship. And I want to join in that congratulations here today because I am a firm believer that education is not only the key for individuals, but a well-educated society, a society that sees an investment in education that is targeted and sensible, we will see a reduction in crime over time—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Ms. A. Haynes:**—and so I join in that congratulations. And then—but—and this is where I realize that the Minister of National Security, I could put my head on a block, absolutely does not know what is going on.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.

### Spiritual Shouter Baptist Liberation Day (Greetings)

**Madam Speaker:** So, hon. Members, as you know, Wednesday, the 30<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2022, our country will celebrate Spiritual Shouter Baptist Liberation Day, therefore, before I put the question on the adjournment to the House, I shall invite Members to bring their greetings. On behalf of the Government.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis):** Member for La Horquetta/Talparo will—

**Madam Speaker:** Member for La Horquetta/Talparo.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**The Minister of Youth Development and National Service (Hon. Foster Cummings):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, as I join with my colleagues, on behalf of the Government Bench, and as a practising Spiritual Baptist myself—

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Cummings:**—I wish to extend to all members of the faith who have over time been able to demonstrate, a level of pride and determination in what our forefathers and those who came before us would have had to endure at the hands of the then Legislature. And to know that today, we as a people can proudly join with

other members of society and freely practise the religion of the Spiritual Shouter Baptist.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Cummings:** Madam Speaker, not too long ago, we lost to COVID, the leader of the Spiritual Baptist faith in Trinidad and Tobago, patriarch, Archbishop Steven Julian and I should take the opportunity at this time to express sincere condolences to the Spiritual Baptist community on the passing of the patriarch of the Spiritual Baptist faith. And let me say that as the faith develops, it is very—is a welcome support that the Government has decided to support the Spiritual Baptist faith in the construction of a modern cathedral for members of the faith at Couva in the vicinity of the Ato Boldon Stadium.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. F. Cummings:** Construction of this facility has already commenced, and we look forward to being able to commission that place of worship in the not too distant future. On Wednesday, members of the faith from throughout Trinidad and Tobago, and many throughout the diaspora in the Caribbean, and North America and Europe will join with Spiritual Baptists in Trinidad and Tobago to celebrate the repeal of the Prohibition Order that prevented Spiritual Baptists from freely conducting their worship in Trinidad and Tobago. And so, on Wednesday, as we celebrate this holiday, we wish to share the experiences, the cultural experience and the traditions of worship with all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and various locations throughout Trinidad and Tobago, will have these celebrations in commemoration of this day.

Once again, on behalf of the Government, on behalf of the Prime Minister and all Members of the Government Bench, I wish all members of the Spiritual



Baptist community a very holy and happy Spiritual Baptist Liberation Day. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Moruga/Tableland.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Ms. Michelle Benjamin** (*Moruga/Tableland*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, as a practising member of the Spiritual Baptist faith, I take great honour in bringing greetings to the community, the Baptist community, on behalf of the Opposition Bench, on behalf of my esteemed political leader, the hon. Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, the Member for Siparia.

Madam Speaker, I would like to raise Thessalonians 5, verses 16 to 18, which shows us:

“...Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing.”—and—

“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ...concerning you.”

On Wednesday the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, 2022, we will be commemorating the Spiritual Baptist Liberation Day and 71 years since the repeal of the Prohibition Ordinance. Towards this observance, we echo sentiments of gratitude to the Baptist community for their contributions to the melting pot we call Trinidad and Tobago. We uplift their resilience, amidst challenges, faced oppressions encountered and disrespect endured, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, their response to the prohibition was one of hope. These unprecedented times have called upon each one of us to have just that hope. The coronavirus pandemic may be coming to an end by God’s grace, but the lesson we have learnt as a community, as the nation of Trinidad and Tobago will forever be with us. Let us look to the exemplary community for guidance and strength for this

community was steadfast in their way forward, Madam Speaker, never giving up, always looking forward and seeking God throughout trying times.

Madam Speaker, with these few words, I would like to end with one of my favourite songs, a line from it:

“I...”—saw—“The Lighthouse shining in glory

I...”—saw—“The Lighthouse, Amen!

Jesus is The Lighthouse...”

And just like the Baptist community practise resilience in all things, I wish the community of Trinidad and Tobago and the Spiritual Baptist community come Wednesday, that when we celebrate in all different sections of Trinidad and Tobago, that we keep on fighting, and we keep on looking to the hills from whence comes our health and strength. I thank you.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, I would also like to extend greetings to the Spiritual Shouter Baptist community as they prepare to celebrate Spiritual Shouter Baptist Liberation Day. Hon. Members, you may recall that Trinidad and Tobago is the only country in the world to celebrate this day by way of a public holiday. This is because the Spiritual Shouter Baptist faith is indigenous to Trinidad and Tobago. This day marks the 1951 repeal of the Shouter Prohibition Ordinance of 1917, which denied members of this faith the freedom of worship and the dignified enjoyment of their religion.

Hon. Members, as we glance across the globe, we see that freedom cannot be an unfettered licence but must be married with responsibility, tolerance, fairness and inclusiveness, all of which are important elements of democracy. Recent world events have demonstrated that we must never be complacent with the existence of democracy. Democracy must not be taken for granted and we must, therefore,

Spiritual Shouter Baptist Liberation Day  
Ms. Benjamin (cont'd)

2022.03.25

jealously safeguard responsibility, tolerance, fairness and inclusiveness. The history behind the Spiritual Baptist faith serves as a reminder to all Members and citizens of the importance of protecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens as enshrined in our Constitution.

Hon. Members, may the bells of freedom, justice, tolerance, inclusiveness, peace and love, continue to ring out loudly and may these principles continue to order our steps as a nation. I therefore, take this opportunity on behalf of the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to extend best wishes to the Spiritual Shouter Baptist community.

**Hon. Members:** [*Desk thumping*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 6.09 p.m.*