

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

*Friday, April 28, 2023*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have received communication from the hon. Ayanna Webster-Roy, Member for Tobago East, who has requested leave of absence from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Member seeks is granted.

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements of the First Citizens Depository Services Limited for the year ended September 30, 2022. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert)*]
2. Audited Financial Statements of the National Enterprises Limited for the period April 1, 2021 to September 30, 2022. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
3. Audited Financial Statements of MIC Institute of Technology Limited for the year ended September 30, 2020. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

**UNREVISED**

4. Annual Audited Financial Statements of Trinidad Nitrogen Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 2021. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
5. Audited Financial Statements of the National Maintenance Training and Security Company Limited for the financial year ended December 31, 2021. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
6. Audited Financial Statements of the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited for the year ended September 30, 2018. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
7. Audited Financial Statements of the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited for the year ended September 30, 2019. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
8. Audited Financial Statements of the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited for the year ended September 30, 2020. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
9. Audited Financial Statements of the National Schools Dietary Services Limited for the year ended September 30, 2021. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]
10. Audited Financial Statements of the National Schools Dietary Services Limited for the year ended September 30, 2022. [*Hon. C. Imbert*]

*Papers 1 to 10 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.*

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS (ENTERPRISES) COMMITTEE**

**National Commission for Self-Help Limited**

**The Minister of Labour (Hon. Stephen Mc Clashie):** Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present:

Ninth Report of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee, Third Session, Twelfth Parliament on an examination of the Audited Financial Statements of the National Commission for Self Help Limited (NCSHL) for the Financial Year 2016 and follow-up on the Implementation of the Recommendations in the Fourteenth Report of the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee from the Eleventh Parliament.

**URGENT QUESTIONS**

**Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service and Police Service Cybercrime Unit**  
**(Update on response of)**

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche East):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. With regard to the abominable spate of bomb threats issued to schools across the nation hours ago which has led to widespread panic, inconvenience and the early dismissal of thousands of students, will the Minister update this House on the response of the

Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service inclusive of the Cybercrime Unit?

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

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

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** Thank you very much. Madam Speaker, very early this morning I received a call from the very caring and professional Minister of Education who indicated to me that there was this problem of a bomb threat at a particular school in Central Trinidad. I was on my way to an event where I knew I would find the Commissioner of Police, the Chief of Defence Staff, the Chief Fire Officer. I proceeded as quickly as I could and engaged them. By the time we got into conversation the number had mushroomed to 10, it later mushroomed to about 20 and then we heard it was largely nationwide, affecting even the island of Tobago.

Madam Speaker, this was described as abominable by the Member, that is the only correct thing that has been said from him in a long time. In fact, it was absolutely abominable that some person or persons would have ventured to do what they did by sending this message of bomb threats across the nation's schools. And I must also agree, it has caused some element of panic, most of which has now

subsided. It has disrupted the school system, disrupted classes, and therefore abominable indeed it is.

Recently, thankfully, the Cabinet approved and we had improved the number of officers in the police Special Branch who are skilled in bomb disposal, bomb technicians as they are called, we increased the number by six with some foreign training within recent times. They always had a Bomb Disposal and Clearance Unit and they all went to work this morning on the various schools ensuring that there was no actual danger and clearing it and inviting them to return to classes. But, of course, by then some of the schools had already dismissed their students.

The Cybercrime Unit and other units of the police service were also deeply engaged in another aspect of the enquiry, that is to determine the source, because that kind of information, particularly, when it is misleading as it is, disruptive as it is, might constitute to other criminal offences and that investigation is also underway. As for the fire service, it went on high alert and was present to deal with any emergencies as might have arisen. Thankfully, Madam Speaker, all has—

**Madam Speaker:** Member.

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—gone well so far—

**Madam Speaker:**—your time is spent.

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—and the situation is returning to normal.

**Madam Speaker:** Your time is spent.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Thank you.

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

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

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. Thank you Minister. Minister given this act of terror perpetuated against citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, particularly children, and the dimension of cybercrime and related to it, is the Government or any agency in the national service, national security community considering requesting international help at this early stage to find those who perpetrated such dastardly act of terror today.

**Madam Speaker:** Minister

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Madam Speaker, I indicated that this matter is under investigation and therefore I myself, though I know my friend and his friends on the other side know a lot about terror, I am not in a position—

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Speaker 48(4) and (6), please. He is imputing.

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

**Madam Speaker:** So, Member just find another way to say that so

that your friends will not be too upset and let us get on with it.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** But it was the Member who introduced the concept of terror, asking me to assume that it was terror. And I am simply saying, Madam Speaker, I am in no position to say that. The matters are under investigation and I will await the outcome of the police investigations to determine what it was. It may have just been an ordinary miscreant. One never knows, which we have plenty.

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

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. Given the implication of this and the disruption that we have seen today, would the Minister indicate whether or not the National Security Council has been convened to discuss this matter?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Unlike another Prime Minister, with which he is very familiar, Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister of the Republic, as soon as this matter broke he made contact with yours truly as Minister of National Security and he directed that action be taken along the lines as I have described. Thank you very much.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And he is the Chairman of the National Security

Council.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche West.

**Invasion of Belmont Secondary School  
(Urgent Resources Deployed)**

**Mr. Davendranath Tancoo** (*Oropouche West*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. With respect to the spate of bomb threats that were made to schools across the nation and the invasion by gunmen hours ago at the Belmont Secondary School, will the Minister inform the House what urgent resources have been deployed to treat with the emotional and psychological effects sustained by traumatised staff, students and parents?

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

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Education.

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, allow me to condemn, on behalf of the Ministry, to condemn in the strongest terms the action taken by nefarious, unknown persons to destabilize the education system in Trinidad and Tobago today.

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

**Hon. Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly:** And worthy of equal condemnation is the persons who committed that act at Belmont Secondary School. In all cases, Madam Speaker, when the email was received, as well as at

Belmont Secondary School, the principals and the teachers let the students out of the school to the muster points and though, thankfully, there have been no reports of any mass hysteria, the school social workers and the school guidance councillors were on hand to hold small group meetings with the students, and any student that presented as having being more traumatized, they were engaged in individual sessions.

Now most of the schools were dismissed, those who had to go to the muster points and so on, but from Monday any student that is requiring that type of assistance will be supported by the staff of the Student Support Services Division.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Oropouche West.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Supplemental question, Madam Minister. Thank you very much for that explanation. Minister can you confirm that you are satisfied with the level of security that currently is in place at these nation's schools.

**Madam Speaker:** All right. So, Member, this is about the emotional and psychological effects and so on. I will not allow that as a supplemental question under this Standing Order. Member for Oropouche West.

**Safety of Staff and Students  
(Measures Taken)**

**Mr. Davendranath Tancoo** (*Oropouche West*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. In light of the threat of criminal activity at schools nationwide, including the use of firearms and explosives, will the Minister indicate what urgent measures are being put in place today and in the coming days to ensure the safety of staff and students?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Education.

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, it was unfortunate that many years ago it was this same threat of criminal activity at schools that would have led to the stationing of security officers at all of our schools, followed by health and safety officers at many of our government secondary schools, and most recently partnerships with the TTPS, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, at our schools. So schools that are located in areas where there is a high incidence of crime those schools are the focus of attention from the TTPS and the principals interact very closely with them. They have more regular patrols in those areas to assure the staff and the students safety as they go about their business of educating our nation's children.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche West.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Supplemental. Thank you again, Madam Minister. Madam Minister back to my initial question, can you confirm that you are satisfied as Minister of Education with the level of security that has been put in place in our nation's schools to protect the students and teachers attending thereto?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Education.

**Hon. Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I have seen over the years, even pre-dating my tenure, the effort of the Government of the day, not just the PNM Government, but every government to ensure that schools are safe. So as I said, we have security officers where we need it more. That was followed by the safety officers and that has been followed by the long established partnership with the police in these areas. So that level of security coming from all different fronts are what we have at our schools and thus far they have been proving effective in keeping our students and teachers safe. However, that partnership with the police, that is the one that is most critical, especially community police in the areas, to ensure that where required a quick response to any criminality is given.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche West.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you again, Madam Minister. Given your response to both the initial question and the supplementary question, you indicated what exists today. However, given what existed today, we still have an activity that took place at Belmont Secondary School today. Is it that nothing more has been put in place to ensure that these kinds' activities do not recur?

**1.45 p.m.**

**Hon. Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In the case of Belmont Secondary, there are some infrastructural issues that have to be addressed and those will be addressed. However, the system of protection of our staff and our students is in place. And as I indicated, if there is indication that more focus is required, that partnership with the police is where we must go because they are the ones that will be equipped to assist us and the schools with quick action, being close to the schools in their communities so that if there is any occurrence of crime we can respond effectively. That partnership is in place, in the schools where we have the situations that have arisen. This is not the first time it has happened. It has happened unfortunately before, but in every case it is our reliance and partnership with the police in these areas to stop whatever criminalities occurring at the level of the school.

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

**North Chamber - House of Representatives  
(Date of Return)**

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal** (*Oropouche East*): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, to the Minister of Housing and Urban Development: Given the resumption of the rainy season and the visible leaks in the South Chamber, will the Minister indicate the date the House of Representatives will return to the North Chamber of the Red House?

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, there is only one visible leak in the South Chamber of the Red House, and this leak is not connected to the rainy season or any incursion of rain water. This leak—

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

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** UDeCOTT told me this. That is how I know. This leak is as a result of the condensation of the drain lines of the air handler. This matter will be addressed on April 29<sup>th</sup>. Further, Madam Speaker, the North Chamber has had a series of work done to it including, Madam Speaker, removal of defective ducting insulation to all areas; inspections and repairs to all branches of the ductwork inclusive of the supply of diffuser boxes; the installation of additional supports to the ductwork; inspections by the design consultants to

determine the extent of the repairs required to the exposed ductwork; in the addition to that, all the defective ductwork has been repaired by the AC contractor and the requisite testing and inspections have also been satisfactorily completed by the design consultant.

Whilst concerted efforts were made and continue to be made to complete the North Chamber at the earliest possible opportunity, due to numerous shipping delays, the delivery of the AC material was impacted and UDeCOTT was compelled to reschedule several critical items of work and defer key deliverables. Madam Speaker, in that regard, we are anticipating that all work and testing will be completed in the month of May and that the return to the North Chamber will be by that time.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. Member, could you confirm or not whether these defects occurred within the defect period and the contractor will bear the entire cost of repair, bearing in mind that this is the same contractor that had difficulty finishing phase 1 of the central block at the Port of Spain Hospital?

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, at this time I cannot say.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay. Could the Minister indicate whether the Minister is aware of the preliminary cost associated with the repair at the North Chamber?

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, at this time I do not have that information.

### **ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Madam Speaker, thank you very much. Madam Speaker, there are eight questions for oral response and we will be answering all. There is one question for written response which we will be answering, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

### **WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION**

### **ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**Retired Justices Rolston Nelson SC and Mr. Justice Stanley John  
(Terms and Conditions of Employment)**

**135. Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh** (*Couva South*) asked the hon. Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs:

Further to the response provided to a Prime Minister's Question on February 03, 2023, will the hon. Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs inform this House of the terms and conditions that were agreed upon to employ the services of the Retired Justices Rolston Nelson, SC and Mr. Justice Stanley John (Retired) to assist in the investigation of the missing Vindra Naipaul-Coolman's case file?

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

**Robinson-Regis):** Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Attorney General, for the clarity of the record since the Member's question appears to be ill-informed, Mr. Justice Rolston Nelson SC (Retired) had been retained by the Attorney General generally to advise the Attorney General with respect to all legal issues arising from and relevant to the missing file in the Vindra Naipaul-Coolman case, including inter alia: to advise whether the default judgment against the State that was entered on January 08, 2021 can be set aside and/or appealed, and to appear in court in respect thereof; to advise on the merits of any possible appeal of the decision on the assessment of damages dated January 30, 2023, and to appear in court in respect thereof; to formulate the terms of reference for an investigating team which terms of reference include that investigating team providing the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs with recommendations for the efficient operation of the Departments of the Solicitor General and Chief State Solicitor.

Mr. Justice Stanley John (Retired) has been appointed by the Attorney General as a lead investigator of that investigating team with respect to the matters outlined in his terms of reference which are a matter of public record. Both esteemed gentlemen were retained by the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs to

provide the aforementioned services and not otherwise. Further, the approximate provisional fee under discussion amounts in the case of Mr. Justice Nelson SC (Retired) to approximately TT \$500,000 for, and the approximate provisional fee under discussion in the case of Mr. Justice Stanley John (Retired) amounts to approximately TT \$300,000. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Minister, based on the fact that an interim report was handed in by Retired Justice Stanley John, are you in a position to inform this House if the loopholes that led to the disappearance of the file have been indeed identified?

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, I do recall that a question of this nature was posed to the Attorney General himself and he did say that at this time he could not give any further information. So no, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And just for clarity purposes, Minister, based on the sums that you provided the House a couple of minutes ago in relation to payments to Justice Rolston Nelson and Justice Stanley John, these are final figures or can we expect these figures to increase with the passage of time?

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, I did say and I will read

the response again. The approximate provisional fee under discussion amounts in the case of Mr. Justice Nelson SC (Retired) to approximately \$500,000, and the approximate provisional fee under discussion in the case of Mr. Justice Stanley John (Retired) amounts to approximately \$300,000—approximately and provisional. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Factory Road, Brechin Castle and Camden Base Road  
(Commencement of Rehabilitation Works)**

**136. Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh** (*Couva South*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Further to the response provided to House of Representatives Question No. 13 on November 04, 2022, will the Minister state when rehabilitation works along Factory Road, Brechin Castle and the Camden Base Road in Couva will commence?

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, these roads are being considered for inclusion in the list of projects to be executed by the new Secondary Roads Rehabilitation and Improvement Company Limited in 2023. No firm timeline can be given at this time because this new programme of roadwork is currently being finalized. Thank you.

**Flood Management Master Plan**

**(Update on Status)**

**140. Mr. Davendranath Tancoo** (*Oropouche West*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Given the Minister's statement as reported in the Trinidad and Tobago Newsday on May 24, 2020 that "in March 2020, Trinidad and Tobago received US \$495,000 (TT\$3.37 million) nonrepayable grant by Corporacion Andina de Fomento (CAF) Development Bank to be used for the creation of a Flood Management Master Plan to address the nation's perennial challenges with drainage and flooding", will the Minister provide an update on the status of the Flood Management Master Plan?

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the work undertaken by the Andina Development Bank in respect to the flood management master plan of the national drainage plan was divided into two strategic plans out of which will flow projects for development. At this stage, approximately 20 projects have been identified for design review and tender preparation. These projects are in various stages of development. Thank you.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Supplemental to the Minister. Minister, given that this

grant was started in May 2020, can the Minister indicate what is the deadline for completion—what is the time frame for completion of this flood management master plan?

**Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan:** Thank you. Madam Speaker, as indicated, this grant was for the preparation of the plan. It is an ongoing process, however you do not have to wait for the plan to be completed. As I did indicate, so far there have been 20 projects generated from this plan which is at different stages of the development. So the plan is an ongoing plan and projects coming out of the plan have already started to be developed. Thank you.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Minister, I understand that it is an ongoing plan and the work

is in progress, however there should be a flood management master plan which is for overall Trinidad and Tobago, and that is the funding that was received—the funding that was received was for that particular purpose for the development of a flood master plan. Are you advising that the money is being spent on a rolling plan as we go along rather than a master plan?

**Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan:** Madam Speaker, when this plan first started I had several questions to answer in the Parliament about it, and I did indicate that coming into the Ministry I found a room where

there were about 20 plans, drainage plans, going back all the way to the '60s. They were all plans and a lot of money was spent, millions of dollars was spent on these plans, but there was no operational plan in place. When we engaged the Andina Development Bank, they took all these plans and created an operation plan to be funded by the Andina Development Bank. There were studies on several parts of the island and several parts of the island had no studies at all. So what is coming out of this process is actual boots on the ground in certain areas where plans have been completed for.

Right now, the study for the western peninsular is taking place, because with all the millions that we spent, millions, there was no study for the western peninsular. So the plan is an ongoing plan for areas where no study was ever done and it also includes boots on the ground in areas, and that is why coming out of this plan you have a lot of work going on in the Caroni area because there was a study done in the Caroni area before. So it is an ongoing plan. As I said, it is divided into two segments, one of which brings boots on the ground immediately. I thank you.

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

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, of

the 20 projects the Minister indicated, can he advise this House whether or not the replacement of the pumps in the El Socorro area are part of those 20 projects based on the funding from this grant?

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. So this is about a flood management master plan, so I will not allow that question under this.

**Coromata River Banks  
(Resumption of Repair Works)**

**141. Mr. Davendranath Tancoo** (*Oropouche West*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Will the Minister advise when the cleaning, dredging and repair works of the Coromata River banks along Suchit Trace, Penal will resume?

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan):** Madam Speaker, desilting works on the Coromata River have started. I presume by the time when the question was posed, the Member may not have seen work going on, but if the Member follows-up now, he will see work has started on the Coromata River. Thank you.

**2.00 p.m.**

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The fact is that when the question was initially proposed, no work was ongoing at that time.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, ask the question, please.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Sure, Madam Speaker. Can the hon. Minister advise what would be the time frame within which such works would be completed?

**Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan:** Madam Speaker, I do not have the time frame because I do not have the scope of works with me. But if the Member poses that question through the proper channels, I am sure that is easy for me to answer. Thank you.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you. Madam Speaker, could the Minister then advise if he has any information at all with regard to the cost of the works being undertaken at the Coromata River?

**Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan:** Madam Speaker, again, if the Minister wants those questions asked—

**Hon. Member:** Member, member.

**Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan:** Sorry, if the Member wants those questions asked and it is posed, “those information” are readily available. What I can tell you is that this is done under the Vote 09 where we use Central Tenders Board, rates for contractors. I do not have the scope, so if I do not have the scope, I would not have the price. But if the question is posed, those answers are readily available at the Ministry and I will be more than prepared to bring them to you. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche West.

**Black Water River  
(Commencement of Works)**

**142. Mr. Davendranath Tancoo** (*Oropouche West*) asked the hon. Minister of Works and Transport:

Will the Minister advise when the cleaning, dredging and repair works of the banks of the Black Water river will commence?

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan):** Thank you, again, Madam Speaker. The desilting work of the Blackwater River is scheduled to be executed in May 2023. It should be started by next week. Thank you.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the Minister be in a position to advise the completion date—the proposed completion date of those works?

**Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan:** Madam Speaker, like before, the question posed to me was, when the work will be commenced. I am prepared to answer when it would commence. If the questions are posed through the right channel, I will definitely be able to supply that. Thank you.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am assuming given that the Minister is prepared to provide documentation in writing and his Ministry should have it—

**Madam Speaker:** Member, Member—

**Mr. Tancoo:** —would the Minister—

**Madam Speaker:** Just for all Members, okay, what the Standing Orders allow, they only allow preambles if it is necessary to make sense for the question. Okay? We know by now this is not for statements. Do you have a question? Yes, please. Please, proceed.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Minister, would you give a commitment to provide in writing to the honourable House the information with regard to the price and the completion date expected?

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. So this is about cleaning, dredging and repair work and the commencement, so I believe you will have an opportunity to pose that as a full question if you wish.

**2020 US Trafficking in Persons Report  
(Laying of)**

**143. Mr. Davendranath Tancoo** (*Oropouche West*) asked the hon. Prime Minister:

With respect to the investigation into allegations that “senior government officials” were involved in human trafficking according to a published 2020 US Trafficking in Persons Report, will the Prime Minister state when will the report be laid in this House?

**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. The Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report is the US Government's principle document—diplomatic mechanism that it uses to engage foreign governments on the issue of human trafficking. Reports on human trafficking in persons for all countries, up to the year 2022, are readily available on the US Department of State's website and there is absolutely no requirement for any such report from a foreign government to be laid in our Parliament, and as such that report will not be laid in our Parliament. The report is dated July 2022.

**Increasing Number of Reports of Crimes Against Women  
(Availability of Pepper Spray)**

**144. Mr. Davendranath Tancoo** (*Oropouche West*) asked the hon. Minister of National Security:

With regard to the Firearms Amendment Act, 2021 which was assented to on July 6, 2021 and the increasing number of reports of crimes against women, will the Minister state when will pepper spray be available to members of the public, especially women to use against their attackers?

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The operationalization of the

Firearms (Amdt.) Act, 2021, which allows for the licensed importation and use of pepper spray by members of the public is being implemented on a phased basis by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, in collaboration with Customs and Excise Division of the Ministry of Finance, and the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards.

In December 2022, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service launched the first phase of the process which included the issue of pepper spray import permits, whereby nine pepper spray import permits have been granted to date. Of the nine permits granted, two importers have already imported pepper spray canisters into the country which are currently awaiting clearance from the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards to ensure that they meet all the necessary requirements for sale within Trinidad and Tobago.

Furthermore, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service has also rolled out the subsequent phase of the process, whereby citizens are permitted to apply for, keep and carry permits for pepper spray via the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service's website. To date, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service has already received 42 applications for pepper spray permits which are currently being processed by the firearms permit unit. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is

currently engaging in discussions with stakeholders concerning the issuance of manufacture permits for pepper spray which will be the final phase of the licensing process to be rolled out.

The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service continues to work towards ensuring the full operationalization of the licensing process. I thank you very warmly, Madam Speaker.

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

**Constituency of Oropouche West  
(24/7 Water Supply)**

**145. Mr. Davendranath Tancoo** (*Oropouche West*) asked the hon. Minister of Public Utilities:

Will the Minister advise when residents in the constituency of Oropouche West will receive a 24/7 water supply?

**The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Marvin Gonzales):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Government is committed to improving the quality of life for all our citizens and not narrowly our citizens residing only in the constituency of Oropouche West or certain constituencies. The policies of this Government are geared towards the advancement of all communities, regardless of geographical locations or wherever one fits within the electoral boundaries of the EBC. A critical focus in this regard is providing all communities throughout Trinidad and Tobago with a safe, efficient,

reliable and affordable water supply.

In this regard, Madam Speaker, there are several constraints to providing a 24/7 water supply to every consumer in Trinidad and Tobago, as is the case in many countries around the world, and these include, constraints, for example, water production capacity, aged infrastructure, non-revenue water, impacts of climate change, pipeline interconnectivity, unplanned developments, destruction of watersheds, pollution of watercourses and topography and high elevation, extreme weather patterns, just to name a few.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the MPU and the Water and Sewerage Authority were successful in pursuing a series of capital low-cost projects across Trinidad and Tobago which resulted in an improvement in the water supply levels: 24/7 to 50 per cent of the population, with the other half of the population enjoying 24/6, 24/4, 24/5, 24/3, and in some cases, Madam Speaker, some communities getting water 24/1 depending on the extremities and the location of some of these communities.

Madam Speaker, it can be easily seen from the several capital investment projects that we would have pursued over the last two years, especially under the Community Water Improvement Programme, the National Water Sector Transformation Programme,

the transformation of WASA and the recently approved IDB loan programme, together with the unveiling of a National Integrated Water Resources Management Policy 2022 and the transformation of WASA, they are all initiatives and programmes that are national in scope and not in any way tailor made for any one locality or constituency.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you, Minister, for your clarification. In your response, you indicated that there are areas receiving up to—50 per cent of the country receiving 24/7 but several areas are receiving less. Are you aware that in the constituency of Oropouche West, there are thousands of individuals, hundreds of homes, who are receiving water—who have been without water for more than two weeks? This is not 24/1 or 24/2 or 24/3. This is two weeks without water to date.

**Hon. M. Gonzales:** Madam Speaker, it is public knowledge that over the last weeks, the Water and Sewerage Authority has faced a number of challenges in the supply of water to some areas in central and south Trinidad as a result of difficulties and challenges from the desalination plant located in Point Lisas. I have explained in this House, Madam Speaker, that WASA is a customer of Desalcott, and Desalcott is contracted to produce over 40 million gallons of water per day, and

when any issue affects Desalcott's ability to provide that 40 million gallons of water per day, unfortunately, the Water and Sewerage Authority is placed and is constrained to provide water to several communities in central and south Trinidad.

And in that context, Madam Speaker, we would have done everything possible to provide a truck borne supply of water, including revamping the truck borne policy to ensure that all customers, regardless of their financial position with the Authority, can obtain a truck borne supply of water. It is as the best we can do. But as long as we continue to have challenges from source, some of which are outside of WASA's control, we will do whatever can be done to ensure that citizens will have access to water supply. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that you have now identified the constraints in supply, in being able to supply sufficient quantities of water, can the Minister advise what specific measures have been put in place to ensure that the constituents of Oropouche West no longer have to depend—they do not have to move from a regular pipe-borne water supply that they were receiving in 2015, to a dependency on a truck borne water supply in 2023?

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

**Hon. M. Gonzales:** Madam Speaker, I note what the Member said, that they were getting water in 2015, and I know exactly what he is referring to. Because the UNC Government spent over \$1 billion, got access to an IDB loan, gave an undertaking that they are going to transform the Water and Sewerage Authority, and on that basis, got access to \$1 billion and not one pipeline was laid in the constituency of Oropouche West.

**Mr. Tancoo:** [*Inaudible*]

**Hon. M. Gonzales:** Not one plant was refurbished in the constituency and therefore, the UNC should be ashamed.

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

**Hon. M. Gonzales:** They should be ashamed that they spent over \$1 billion and did not construct one pipeline in several of the constituencies, especially in Mayaro, in Cumuto/Manzanilla, in Caroni Central.

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

**Hon. M. Gonzales:** All of them, Madam Speaker, spent over \$1 billion, \$1 billion and they have neglected and—

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

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, hon. Members, I would like to

hear the response from the Minister. I am having great difficulty in hearing. Minister of Public Utilities.

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

**Hon. M. Gonzales:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, they have no moral authority to come here and question me on what I am doing to improve water supply to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

**Hon. M. Gonzales:** As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, I can boast that within the last two years, a number of projects would have been undertaken in UNC constituencies, many of which received water for the very first time and if they had spent the \$1 billion they got from the IDB, they would not come here today asking me about water supply in their constituencies.

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

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Minister, I represent the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and it is my responsibility to question your expenditure. I asked you a specific supplemental—

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

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Oropouche West, I had advised about

the preambles and the statements. Please ask your question. Please.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Yes, Madam Speaker. I want to repeat the question I asked that the Minister spent the time rambling about. Given that you have identified that you are not able to increase the supply of water, what specifically have you put in place, or are you putting in place, to ensure that the constituents of Oropouche West receive a better water supply than they were getting?

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

**Madam Speaker:** So, Member, from your own mouth, you said the question has already been asked.

**Mr. Tancoo:** The question was asked and not answered, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** An answer was given. Do you have another question? This is your last question.

**2.15 p.m.**

**Mr. Tancoo:** Madam Speaker, an answer was given that did not relate to the question. A specific question was asked. I repeated the question just now. Can the Minister advise what specific projects have been put in place, what specific measures have been put in place, to ensure that the constituents of Oropouche West receive a better water supply than they are getting today.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Member, according to Standing Orders, your question is out of order. It has been asked and an answer has been given.

**Mr. Tancoo:** But no answer was given to the question I asked.

**PENTECOSTAL ASSEMBLIES OF THE WEST INDIES  
(INC’N) (AMDT.) BILL, 2023**

*Question put and agreed to:* That a Bill to amend the Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies Incorporation Act, 1965, be now read the first time.

*Bill accordingly read the first time.*

**LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THE MINISTER OF  
NATIONAL SECURITY**

**Mr. Saddam Hosein** (*Barataria/San Juan*): Madam Speaker, I beg to move following Motion standing in my name:

*Whereas* the Minister of National Security is responsible for ensuring public safety by the maintenance of law and order and the effective oversight of the national security infrastructure;

*And whereas* the Minister of National Security through his vast and continued incompetence has mismanaged the organs and departments of national security;

*And whereas* the Minister of National Security has

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unequivocally demonstrated his inability to competently execute his duties:

*Be it resolved* that this House express its lack of confidence in the Minister of National Security.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Madam Speaker, earlier during today's proceedings, the Minister of National Security responded to a question filed by the Member for Oropouche East, in relation to what took place today regarding the bomb threats to several schools in Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity also to condemn that coward action, that act of terror.

And when we thought the Minister of National Security would have given a compassionate, effective response, he gave an inept, ineffective and incompetent response to a situation that affected the safety and lives of our nation's children. Madam Speaker, that response today by the Minister justifies the reason why the Opposition has filed this particular Motion asking this House to condemn and express no confidence in the Minister of National Security, the Member for Laventille West.

He also admitted, Madam Speaker, that as a Member of the National Security Council, that he did not find it fit to request a

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meeting, convening the sitting of the National Security Council to properly address and assess the threat of this particular matter; irresponsible, Madam Speaker, totally irresponsible.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** But, Madam Speaker, today I am not here to convince the population that crime is an issue. I think the entire country knows that we are under siege by the criminals. I am not here this afternoon, Madam Speaker, to convince this House or Trinidad and Tobago that Minister Hinds is a failure, or that he is incompetent. He has effectively proven for himself—

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:**—that he is unable to perform the duties as Minister of National Security. I am here to express the voices of the tens of thousands of citizens in this country that they want Minister Hinds to go.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Madam Speaker, today he holds the record for the highest murder toll ever recorded in our nation's history, since independence. We have recorded over 600 murders last year, and today he sits as the Minister of National Security. One asks why the Prime Minister has so much confidence in this Minister, but yet the

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country has no confidence in him.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Madam Speaker, he is known for abdicating his responsibilities with impunity. He tells the nation, in an arrogant manner, that his job is not to make the population feel safe. He also tells them that it is not his responsibility to develop a crime plan. So, Madam Speaker, what is he doing in that chair? What is he doing? He has been appointed since April 2021. What has the Minister been doing for the last two years, if his job is not to make the population feel safe?

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Madam Speaker, people will often use the term that you are falling asleep on job the figuratively but with this Minister, he literally falls asleep on the job. He has an unenviable talent for speaking rubbish. He is tired. He is lazy. He is incompetent. He is inept and he should go.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** If you ask the average man on the street: What do you think about Minister Hinds? You know what they will tell you, Madam Speaker? He must go. But incidentally, the *Guardian* newspaper has done it. There is an article dated 22<sup>nd</sup> December, 2022

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entitled:

“Citizens on performance of National Security Minister”

And the *Guardian* article goes on, and I quote:

“Kevin Ellis, a Trincity resident...”he says, and I quote:

‘If he feels that way, he probably needs to step down and give somebody else a chance to run that department and hopefully the census will change because if he feels that way, it means that he would be unable to do his job effectively.’”

“Ava Solomon, from Arima... ‘He is the one in charge, so he could come up with better excuse for the crime rate. Tell us what you intend to do, we have not heard that, how you intend to improve things, we have not heard that. So what he said is unacceptable.’”

Shelly-Ann Balcon from Arima:

“‘Nah, I ain’t supporting him at all. Better could be done. Much better could be done. The crime situation is really terrible and I am hoping next year please the Lord, it will be better because every year it is too much crime and too many innocent children getting their deaths.’”

Two members from Arima said that, while they were in Port of Spain. I do not know if the Member for Arima also holds that same view.

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But, Madam Speaker, I also want to tell this House what Members of the PNM think about Minister Hinds. There is an article, Madam Speaker, from the Trinidad *Guardian*, dated 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2022, and it is entitled:

“Reckless words from Hinds”

And this article is quoting now the blue boy of the PNM, newly-minted Sen. Richie Sookhai. I think he is the sidekick of the Works Minister. And Sookhai told the *Express*, I am quoting, Madam Speaker:

“Sookhai told the *Express* yesterday it is alarming that such ‘reckless’ statements are being made when the murder toll stands at an unprecedented level, and a nation, composed of a majority of law-abiding citizens, continues to cower in fear of the criminal element.”

He is referring to Minister Hinds’ statement.

“He said the minister cannot be allowed to make such remarks without accountability, as the population remains waiting for some intervention to tackle the crime scourge.

In a news release, Sookhai later accused Hinds of engaging in deflection, and asked, ‘Where is the actual statistical evidence to back up this claim?’ Saying that ‘70 per cent of the society

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wants us to fail on crime' is deflecting from the real issues facing the State—that is, matters...”

This is what he is saying about Minister Hinds:

“that is, matters of poor management, lack of accountability and the failure to deal with the soaring crime rate of Trinidad and Tobago correctly and efficiently, '...

It is simply a warning signal of poor leadership and the incompetence of the state to acknowledge full responsibility for the escalating crime rate battering our economy...”

Madam Speaker, this is Sen. Richie Sookhai while he was the President of the Chaguanas Chamber. He said, Madam Speaker, that the Minister must account to the people. He must account to the people and he is a signal for poor leadership in his role as the Minister of National Security. And if there is anything I would want to agree with, with the goodly Senator, is that he also probably thinks that Minister Hinds must go.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** And, Madam Speaker, it is not only us inside here who think so. When you look at what the media has to say about the Minister of National Security, there is an *Express* editorial dated 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2022, and this was with respect to what the *Express* views

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the Minister as. They say:

“To add salt to the injury of neglect, we have a Minister of National Security who appears to spend more time on social media, handing out insults for every perceived slight against the Government, with the Leader of the Opposition being his prime target.

Based on his insistence on retaining the clueless Fitzgerald Hinds in the National Security portfolio, we have to assume the Prime Minister likes it so.”

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** This is the *Trinidad Express*, Madam Speaker. This is the *Trinidad Express*.

Madam Speaker, another editorial dated 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2022 says when the Minister made remarks about the shooting at the Rose Hill RC Primary School. Madam Speaker, I am quoting. These are not my words:

“How dense could Minister Hinds be to have clearly missed the point of the public's pain arising as a direct result of this incident?”

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Madam Speaker, this is not my words. Madam

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Speaker, on the 10th May, 2022, this Minister abdicating his responsibility said again, and I am quoting from a CNC3 article:

“Hinds: Crime ‘Horrendous’ but I won’t resign.”

Minister Hinds, today we demand you resign.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** On the 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2022, again, in abdicating his responsibilities, he said—in a *Guardian* article 12th July, 2022:

“You have all kinds of theories as to the cause of crime, there is no magic wand.”

But, Madam Speaker, last night an article surfaced, dated 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2014 from CNC3 and it reads:

“In the 7 PM news: the People’s National Movement says it has an overnight plan to fix the police service and crime on a whole.”

So, one minute the Minister saying that his job is to have crime plan. Next minute he is saying there is no magic wand. And before they got into Government, bamboozling the population, telling the people of Trinidad and Tobago they have an overnight plan to fight crime. Madam Speaker, this Minister is the head of the national security apparatus and organs in this country and he has not a single clue of what to do in Trinidad and Tobago today; not a single clue.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Imagine I just got, while we were sitting here, Madam Speaker, on my phone, an article from the Trinidad *Express*, while we were here answering questions and asking questions, and this is what the reality of our country is:

“Bloody scene: Granny dead in bedroom”

Bloody scene: Granny dead in bedroom?

“Police are at the scene in New Grant where an elderly woman with blood and bruises was found dead in her bedroom.”

Found dead in her bedroom. This is the reality of our country, Madam Speaker? Is it this is where we are going or where we have reached, Madam Speaker? And Madam Speaker, you cannot present a cogent, effective plan to instill some level of confidence in the population so that people will have a sense of safety, so that the criminals will have a sense of fear, so that they would not offend. Madam Speaker, this is someone’s grandmother.

Imagine when children were in a classroom, ducking under tables because of gunshots, this Minister would have said that those children were overreacting. This morning, Madam Speaker, two men ran into Belmont Secondary School to beat up a safety officer inside there, and this Minister continues to sit as the Minister of National

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Security. Madam Speaker, he is inept and he must go.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** He must go.

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

**2.30 p.m.**

**Mr. S. Hosein:** We have not heard, Madam Speaker, we have not heard with respect to what are the plans going forward for these cybercrime attacks. If there was another government under the leadership of Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC, Madam Speaker, I can tell you that they would have had an emergency meeting—

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:**—of the National Security Council, all organs of national security would have been activated, all of the SSA intelligence gathering capabilities, the TTPS, fire, defence, everybody, Madam Speaker. And we would have had a better handle on this because we understood, we had the people there, Madam Speaker. But this PNM Government, through politics has dismantled what we left them with in 2015. They have dismantled it.

Madam Speaker, they are using the SSA to spy on political opponents. They are not using the SSA to spy on the criminals who they ought to have been gathering information and intelligence on,

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Madam Speaker. But it seems as though the cybercrime unit in this country is only activated when senior government official's phones go missing.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Imagine, four months in this year have gone, four months, and we have already recorded two hundred murders this year. Two hundred murders. I call shame on this Minister of National Security.

We are all under attack. Madam Speaker, yesterday while I was preparing for this Motion a pundit in my constituency was robbed in broad daylight outside of his door, a pundit. Imagine people in this country had respect for our religious leaders in this country and a pundit was robbed of his money outside of his home.

Yesterday was the funeral of Aranguez businessman Cheval Ramjattan, a hardworking man trying to make an honest living gunned down by criminals. During the month of Ramadan, I attended the funeral of Rishard Ali, the businessman who was killed in Charleville. Madam Speaker, the hurt and the pain that I saw that day of his two children and his wife crying over his dead body is something that will never leave me. I invite this Minister of National Security, go to one of those funerals and view the pain and the hurt

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that these family members endure, and then he might find his way to leave the doors of the Cabinet and have someone competently manage our national security in this country. Because he cannot be continuing to hold on to a hefty salary, 24/7 security, and he is doing nothing for that. Absolutely nothing. He is being paid over \$50,000 every single month and he is not performing for that salary.

Madam Speaker, we have never seen such level of incompetence in national security in Trinidad and Tobago before. We have never seen it. The first recital of this Motion, Madam Speaker, it reads:

“...the Minister of National Security is responsible for ensuring public safety by the maintenance of law and order and the effective oversight of the national security infrastructure;”

And it is the primary, it is the primary responsibility of the Minister of National Security to ensure safety and security of the citizens of this country. The primary responsibility. But he tells us “no”, that is not his job, that is the job of who? The Commissioner of Police. He says his job alone is to provide resources to these national security organs. Madam Speaker, well then, if that is his logic, then let us close down the Ministry of National Security and allow the Minister of Finance to provide those organs with the finance. Because he clearly is not doing

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anything, because all of the organs of national security are under-resourced and under-staffed and underperforming just like this Minister of National Security.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** When he abdicates his responsibility by his flippant remarks that he does not have a duty to make people feel safe or create a crime plan, what leadership does that engender within the national security apparatus? If they are looking at the Minister of National Security and he is saying, “Well, dais nuh my wuk”, do you think those junior officers will have any motivation to continue to do their jobs effectively and work over hours—work hard to ensure that we bring perpetrators to justice? It is a slap in the face to every citizen when he tells them that his job is not to make them feel safe.

Madam Speaker, when I look at the gazetted responsibilities of this Minister, you would see all of the departments of Government that are under his purview:

“Airspace and Territorial Waters  
Cadet Force  
Citizenship  
Defence Force...  
Drug Enforcement/Interdiction

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Drug Trafficking and Money Laundering  
Forensic Services...”

—which I will get to later in my contribution—

“Immigration

Intelligence

Internal Security

National Emergency/Disaster Management

Offender Management

...(ODPM)

Probation...

Public Order Safety and Law Enforcement.”

Madam Speaker, all of these organs, these are just a few. These are organs under the oversight of this Minister. The Minister is saying that his job is not to create a crime plan, but it is the job of the Commissioner of Police. That is not so, Madam Speaker. Because to effectively deal with crime in this country you must have all of the organs of national security working in a coordinated, systematic, and efficient manner consistent with each other. You cannot silo these organs, they must be interconnected. Because when the SSA gathers intelligence, that intelligence ought to go to the TTPS or the defence force in order for them to act on it. And then, they will do their proper

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investigation. After the investigation, take them to the criminal justice side, Madam Speaker. So there is a consistent and systematic approach that should have been taken. So to blame—

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** So to blame the Commissioner of Police for the crime situation and that she is responsible for devising a crime plan, is the Minister not understanding his responsibilities as at the Minister of National Security?

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** He is clueless, and he is hapless, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, he has never presented a solution to fix crime. He has identified every single problem, but he has never offered a single solution. Never offered a single solution. He is saying that the TTPS should remove all the guns from the streets. Yes, I agree. We need to get the illegal firearms off the street, but you also have to have oversight over the coast guard to ensure that our borders—

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:**—are protected. That is one block in it. You have to have a coordinated approach, so you cannot blame the Commissioner of Police alone. Minister, you are to blame, the buck stops with you.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** The buck stops with you. Madam Speaker, when you walk around this country nobody feels safe, you know. Not a single person feels safe. I could stand on this side of the House, I could stand at the other side of the House, their constituents are also telling them, Madam Speaker, that they do not feel safe.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** There is fear, there is anxiety, and there is worry in this country. This is fear. I have a couple of my friends who I speak to on a daily basis, she has children, Madam Speaker, toddlers, and she tells me every time a dog barks in the night she cannot sleep because she is looking right around of her home to see if somebody is invading her property. Is that the standard of life that we want to have our citizens living in in this country?

And yet the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister finds it fit to keep this incompetent, inept Minister of National Security.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Madam Speaker, on Wednesday we sat. Last Wednesday we sat, and the Minister in answering my colleague from Caroni East with respect to the crime situation in Cunupia, spoke of a violent crime reduction plan handed to him by the TTPS. And he said in this plan there are golden pillars. These are the golden pillars. I

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hope is not “roll gold”. It is: precision was the first one, intelligence, prevention, proactivity, and prosecution. They are going to focus on high incidence of violence areas, which they deemed as hot spots. And there are 15 objectives for successful implementation. And he gave a few: dismantling of criminal gangs—so what have you been doing all of the time?—seizing illegal firearms; is this the new plan? What have you been doing all the time? Eradicating drug blocks—wow, big plan. What have you been doing all the time? Precision policing, identifying priority offenders, meaning repeat offenders—what have you been doing all of the time? Focus on transnational organized crime—what have you been doing all of the time?

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** He said that they are controlling the movement on roadways. Is that the new plan, to have roadblocks? What have you been doing all of the time? Enhancing policing intelligence capabilities—Madam Speaker, what have they been doing all of the time?

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** They said, Madam Speaker, that they have 11 targets. These are the targets, eh; they want a 20 per cent reduction on homicide rates, and then a 30 per cent detection rate for homicide.

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Madam Speaker, the last time I checked, 50 per cent is a pass mark. They are actually aiming to fail, you know.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Their goal is to fail. When criminals hear that the TTPS is aiming for a 30 per cent detection rate in this country, how can that be a deterrent for them not committing crimes? They are not aiming to pass, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, this PNM Government—well, the PNM in several incarnations, had every crime plan, you know, in the alphabet, from A for anaconda, to Z for zero tolerance, you know. And not one has worked because every single time that the PNM is in power crime always increases.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** And that is not by “vaps”, you know. That is because they have cut social security, they cut education and training programmes, because they have stifled the population so much we are still reeling from COVID and today we are feeling the effects of that lockdown with this crime situation. Because thousands of citizens in this country have lost opportunities, and they have lost their jobs and livelihoods, all because of this wicked, uncaring, incompetent, inept, PNM Government. That is it.

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Madam Speaker, that plan I just told you about, that so-called plan, Prof. Deosaran made a comment on it in the *Trinidad Express* and he said:

“Tell us when crime plan will bear fruit”

Madam Speaker, nobody has confidence in this Government. Nobody has confidence in this Minister of National Security; nobody.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** But if we have to take the Minister for his word that his job is not to devise the plan but to provide resources, let us examine the TTPS. Let us examine the TTPS. His job is to provide resources, so that means that is human resource, that is equipment, that is other capabilities. In the Standing Finance Committee last year, Madam Speaker, when we were doing the budget exercise, Minister Hinds said that there are 7,884 personnel, that is the amount of personnel required for the TTPS. However, the actual strength is 6,514. Meaning that there is a shortage of 1,371 officers in the TTPS.

Over 1,300 officers, we are short on the TTPS but yet his responsibility is to provide resources. And he said that the TTPS, they are not complaining about resources. Madam Speaker, when you look at the amount of police vehicles, you would always hear the complaint that when you call the police station they do not have enough

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vehicles. The fleet consists of 1,965 vehicles, 1,250 were operational, and 715 are not operational. That is the resources that they boast about. That is the resources he said he is responsible for, Madam Speaker. That Minister of National Security. He is saying that his job is to provide them with resources but the TTPS currently is under-staffed and under-resourced. They are setting up the TTPS to fail.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** They are setting up the TTPS to fail. Madam Speaker, as I told you, the Minister, he is well aware of all of the issues within the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. I have in my hand a document called the “Final Report of the Police Manpower Audit Committee”. This report was referred to a joint select committee. The Member for Laventille West, he was the chairman of that committee while I was there. I was in another place at that time, Madam Speaker.

**2.45 p.m.**

And this report tells us about all of the issues with respect to the TTPS—all of the issues, such as manpower strength and utilization of the TTPS, the systems and processes of the TTPS, community policing and partnership, governance, discipline structure and public

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confidence. There have been recommendations, but what the Minister chose to do is sit on this report and do absolutely nothing.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** I do not know if he uses this report as a pillow when he takes his nap but, Madam Speaker, he has not actioned the recommendations as outlined in this report. Prof. Ramesh Deosaran would have been the Chairman of this Police Manpower Audit Report and the recommendations are solid, Madam Speaker. When we looked at it, the Joint Select Committee went through the recommendations one by one. We called the various arms of national security to give evidence, what are your views on this particular report, Madam Speaker, and yet they have not actioned the recommendations found in this report. He is no stranger to this JSC report. So one has to wonder whether or not their job is really to fix or they want the TTPS to work effectively.

Madam Speaker, one of the issues that we looked at within that report is that, why do we have police officers behind the desks? Put civilians behind the desks and the police officers on the road.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Put civilians behind the desks and police officers on the streets, Madam Speaker. Let them go out and fight the criminals.

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Those are issues that we have discussed in the Manpower Audit Report, Madam Speaker. We discussed the police inspectorate to ensure accountability and public confidence within the service. He will say that—sorry, the Minister will say that is the job of the Commissioner of Police. No, no, no, no, Madam Speaker, the Minister has the right to make policy when it comes to national security. These are policy decisions—policy decisions, you know.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** —where are the joint army patrols in this country? Where are the joint army patrols? The criminals are taking over the streets of Trinidad and Tobago, but we are not seeing the presence of the army joint with the TTPS. When the Member for Siparia was the Prime Minister, Madam Speaker, there was an increased police presence—

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Madam Speaker, there was increased police presence on the streets. There were joint army patrols, Madam Speaker, working again in tandem with each other. A systematic, coordinated approach in order to fight crime in this country. That is why we could have recorded some of the greatest achievements in national security Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Last year we crossed 600 murders and there is an article saying, from the *Trinidad Express*, that by the year 2030, the trajectory is that we may start recording 710 murders. Madam Speaker, I do not think we may have to wait until 2023. It might be 2020—2030, sorry, we may very well see us reaching that level of 710 murders. In this year, we have already recorded 200 murders and we are four months into 2023. As my friend from Oropouche East reminds me, he says that:

Trinidad is in a state of being unpoliced.

We are in a state of being unpoliced. The criminals are no longer fearful of the repercussions in this country. They are no longer fearful. Madam Speaker, we raised time and time again in this Parliament issues regarding the CCTV cameras. When we looked at what is taking place with the CCTV cameras, last year budget we heard the Minister announce that there will be 2,500 CCTV cameras. Madam Speaker, they “cyah” fix one camera, you think they will install 2,500 cameras?

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Right now there are 1,123 cameras functional and over 673 non-functional cameras. Where Andrea Bharatt’s body was

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found, Madam Speaker, they cannot find it fit to put a camera in that particular area after other bodies have been found there. Shame on this Government, Madam Speaker, shame.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Shame on this Government.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Then I see, Madam Speaker—we are having all of these issues with respect to what is taking place in our country, nobody feels safe, home invasions, robbery, murders. I saw an invitation circulating on social media—and I hope this is fake, you know, Madam Speaker. It is the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Women Police, “Fresh Essence Tea Party and Fashion Show” to be held at the Commissioner of Police’s Residence, Saaman Drive, St. James, April 30<sup>th</sup> at 3.00 p.m. And they are giving a prize—hear this, a prize for the best hat and other giveaways. Today, Madam Speaker, I tell the Commissioner of Police, policing is not a tea party. Get out and do the job. Get out on the streets and do the job.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Crime is not fashionable, Madam Speaker. We have a granny just killed this morning and you are going to put on your fancy hat and go to a fashion show and tea party, Madam Speaker?

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Now, I support and I encourage the women of the TTPS but, Madam Speaker, timing right now is everything, our nation is under siege.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** All hands on deck, Madam Speaker. All hands should be on deck with respect to this issue of crime in our country.

Madam Speaker, I want to address you on the issue of home invasion. Home invasions have been one of the most—it has been on the increase with respect from the last year onto this year, Madam Speaker. There has been a recent spate of home invasions across our country. And as a Member of the Opposition—and I take the authority from my Bench to express our grief with all of those members of our country and all the citizens who may have lost lives and may have been terrified by these criminals through home invasions. And while we sympathize with these families, we are offering solutions, Madam Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition has proposed a law, “stand your ground law”, Madam Speaker—

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** —that where you find a criminal in your home, you have the right to defend your life, your family and your property from those criminals.

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

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**Mr. S. Hosein:** Your home is your castle—

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** —and you must be able to stand your ground against these criminals. Because if this Government cannot protect us, we must be allowed to protect ourselves.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Madam Speaker, the home invasions are vast and wide. Every day, if you just look at social media, Madam Speaker, you will see the CCTV footage of these criminals jumping over your fence or robbing you by the gate as soon as you enter your homes. I have a list in my hand here several pages of the home invasions in this country. Those are the ones that were just reported, Madam Speaker, and I am sure that there are many more in this country.

Imagine what is taking place in this country, and when members of the public recommend or they ask the TTPS to lend assistance after their homes have been invaded—I have a *Loop* TT article dated the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, 2021, which says that the:

“Cops use a private vehicle to respond to robbery in progress”.

That is the performance of this Minister of National Security. Totally inept, incompetent and clueless where the police service have to use private vehicles to respond to a robbery in progress. Shameless,

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Madam Speaker, shameless. It is shameless that that has to happen in this country.

Madam Speaker, with respect to what is taking place in the home invasion issue, the Minister has not provided a solid plan or policy in order to get this situation addressed. Why must citizens of this country continue to live in self-imposed jails, Madam Speaker? Why must they continue to live in self-imposed jails? This is destroying business confidence in our country. It is destroying our tourism industry, Madam Speaker, all because this Minister cannot get a hold of his Ministry. He has been there since 2021, and in 2023, he has done absolutely nothing but make the situation worse.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Nothing but make the situation worse.

Madam Speaker, under this PNM Government, there have been a total of 3,553 reported murders. And you know what the detection rate is?—12 per cent, 12 per cent, you know. Of that 3,553 murders, only 441 were detected. The Minister of National Security sat on a budget for the last—well, this Government sat on a budget of national security, from 2016 to 2021, of over \$35 billion—\$35 billion, and the police had to borrow somebody's car to go and respond to a robbery in this country. Shameless, Madam Speaker, shameless.

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Madam Speaker, when they have spent \$35 million in national security for the last six years, we are seeing in 2021:

“Two families tied up in home invasion”.

April 2022:

“D’Abadie man, 63, beaten robbed in home invasion”.

May 30, 2022:

“...Gangs now specialising in home invasions”.

19 July, 2022:

“2 bandits shot dead in failed El Socorro home invasion”.

August 10, 2022:

“Home invasion suspects still at large”.

August 12, 2022:

“Princes Town woman tied up and robbed during a home invasion”. September 18—*Guardian*—2022:

“Citizens fear terror during home invasion”.

October 26, 2022:

“Bound, forced to lie on ground: Malabar couple robbed in home invasion”.

“Pensioner, 90, and son, 60, tied up beaten during home invasion”.

“Citizens still terrified after home invasions”.

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And one of our own councillors:

“...councillor”—Rajbal Maraj—“robbed at gunpoint in home invasion”.

“Businessman’s family traumatised after home invasion”.

“TTPS confirms home invasion on”—the—rise”.

“Security expert: Criminals more sophisticated in home invasions”.

“Brazen home invasions on the rise...”—January 09, 2023.

“Couple allegedly robbed, assaulted by five men in home invasion”.

“Family beaten in Central Trinidad armed robbery”.

“Penal man killed during home invasion”.

“Pregnant woman hit in the stomach during a home invasion...”— on Valentine’s Day of this year.

“Police investigate major break-in, burglary at gated community in Trincity”.

Vehicle inspector, companion, beaten, robbed in violent attack at home”.

“Cumuto couple tied up, assaulted in home invasion”.

“Terror at home

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Chilling phone call to cops as Aranguez family terrorised by intruders...”—yet another home invasion, this time in Debe.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, I am just reminding you, you have five more minutes left of speaking time.

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Wow. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, the time has flown. Madam Speaker, those are just some of the examples of the home invasion in this country. Madam Speaker, may I just ask, five minutes to full time?

**Madam Speaker:** Yes, full time.

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Full time. Thank you very much. Madam Speaker, let me just go on to the proliferation of illegal firearms in this country. We have recorded over 28,000 illegal firearms in this country, Madam Speaker, and the firearms are continuing to come through our borders because we have no scanners working at the ports, Madam Speaker, none in Port of Spain, none in Point Lisas, Madam Speaker. What is taking place with the two Cape-class vessels you bought from Austal? You remember the big ceremonies and the tour for those vessels?

Madam Speaker, we still have thousands of guns on our streets coming in through our country. We do not manufacture firearms in Trinidad and Tobago. They are imported here, Madam Speaker. The

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gangs, we have not seen the number of gangs reduced. We are not seeing any impact on the murder toll, Madam Speaker.

What is taking place at the Forensic Science Center? Madam Speaker, it was a total joke yesterday, Madam Speaker, that this Minister, boasting, taking pictures of commissioning a 40-foot container for the Forensic Science Centre, Madam Speaker. It was embarrassing. It has one laptop in it and it is caged by chain-link wire, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, when I saw the press release that there are upgrades to the Forensic Science Center, I thought it was a state-of-the-art facility. I did not know it was a state-of-the-art container.

Madam Speaker, this Government is a joke, Madam Speaker. A total, total joke.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** And, Madam Speaker, while I have your ear for just a couple more minutes, I want to say, Madam Speaker, that this country is fed up of this Government, we are fed up of Minister Hinds and we are fed up of Dr. Rowley.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** The only job that this Minister should have is no job at all.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** The criminals are the only one in this country who has confidence in him. Madam Speaker, the only thing he can run is from floodwaters.

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

**3.00 p.m.**

Madam Speaker, the *Express* newspaper has used him as a litmus test, to determine the yardstick for speaking nonsense. Madam Speaker, I want to ask my colleagues, who are sitting on the other side of this House, that when your constituents are grieving because their loved ones were murdered, raped or robbed, I want you to go and tell them that you support Minister Hinds as the Minister of National Security.

Madam Speaker, today, I plead with the Member for Arouca/Maloney, the whip the lift and take a conscious vote to find out whether or not his colleagues will support him today, Madam Speaker. Minister Hinds, I must tell you, your own colleagues do not support you. They may smile with you, but they are stabbing you in the back.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** Madam Speaker, the Cabinet does not want him, the

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country does not want him, only the Prime Minister wants him and we must ask: What does Minister Hinds know that the Prime Minister does not want us to know? The Government has reduced, and this Minister has reduced, Trinidad and Tobago to flood and blood flowing in our streets. Madam Speaker, Minister Hinds must go. Thank you.

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

**Mr. S. Hosein:** I beg to move.

*Seconded by Mr. D. Lee.*

*Question proposed.*

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I just listened painfully to the Member for Baratavia/San Juan, who I could suggest does not know what is

the meaning of the term SDO, does not understand what is a beat on patrol, does not understand—cannot tell you what is even a woggle, from my Cub Scout days, but he made all kinds of pronouncements on law enforcement and the police service and the defence force, wet behind the ear, you know, have not a clue, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, so clueless was the Member for Baratavia/San Juan and so scathing in his empty criticism.

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Last week, we went to the Forensic Science Centre, a place from which some 42 guns went missing when the UNC was in power in this country.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** When I visited that place, as soon as I came to this office, and I saw the way evidence was managed in that place, I recognized that the evidence continued to be at risk, because the cases of those items of evidence would fall. Every single item that goes into the Forensic Science Centre for its analysis and its management, is part of the evidence in the case in the court, and if it is missing—I, as a practising lawyer, have seen cases fall as a result. So reckless and empty they are. They did nothing about it. On the other hand, I took action to improve the security of the items in the Forensic Science Centre, and the empty Member for Barataria/San Juan comes here, being applauded by the empty Member for Siparia to salute it.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** So what we did? Working with an international agency, UNLIREC, we negotiated this custom-built container, where all these guns that were strewn all over the place, waiting for the next criminal to enter—

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Yeah, I hear the—look. Waiting—

**Hon. Member:** What?

**Madam Speaker:** Member, please. Remember you are directing your contribution to the Chair. All right?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** So, we now have the system digitized, and we have a strong security apparatus. We fenced it. We put cameras on the outside on the inside. We put a sign on the outside, even to tell the fire service if something happens there, what is inside of it, so they will know how to treat with it, because a lot of it is explosives. We took action to improve it, because part of my job, as Minister of National Security, is to fix and improve and correct problems in the system going forward. That is what we did. But we did not stop there.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** We negotiated with our international partner, China, and we now have drawn plans for the development of a brand new Forensic Science Centre, having heard from those who are engaged in it, that that place has outlived its usefulness. When Siparia was Prime Minister and the UNC were in Government, they did nothing about that. We have identified land, we have identified a plan, a plan has been draw, and we have a commitment from one of our international

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partners for the construction of a brand new US \$30 million Forensic Science Centre in the constituency of St. Joseph.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** That is what we did, and that empty, wet-behind-the-ear Member, criticizing a container, but let me move on. Let me move on. Since this Motion is about me, I crave your indulgence, Madam Speaker, to tell this Parliament a little bit about me that they may not know. Throughout my secondary school years, I took time for the extra-curricular activity of being a member of Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force. I began to imbibe the qualities of discipline and leadership from as early as that. I rose to the rank of Sergeant, a proud achievement for me. If you ask the Member for Barataria/San Juan now, he does not even know the different between left/right or right/left. He probably disjointed, dis-coordinated, cannot even march and talking about National Security.

Madam Speaker, I then joined the police service, at the age of 18, and retired from the police service—I stayed only seven years—as a police instructor, training thousands of police officers in drill and weapon training and martial arts. Plenty of the police officers that we all speak about in this House, would have been some of my trainees when I was a police instructor, understanding what law enforcement

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was and what it required from as early as that. I left the police service out of sheer ambition, and I started to sell insurance in this country and emerged as the top agent in my branch for seven straight years—

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—qualifying for international conferences and what have you, and there is where I developed some skills about marketing and selling and self-confidence and public engagements, Madam Speaker, and did that quite and successfully well.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** That did not stay there. I decided to go to London to study law, and I went and I began an external programme in London to do my LLB. I did so particularly well in the first year, they accepted me, internally, in the University of London for my second and third years.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I got my LLB. I went on to do a Master's Degree in Law with constitutional law as the primary mover and, Madam Speaker, the reason why I am saying so, is because I have to listen to wet behind the ear Member for Barataria/San Juan, telling me about my ministerial responsibility. You will recall—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(4), he is

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repeatedly insulting the Member.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Wet behind the—

**Hon. Members:** Yes.

**Madam Speaker:** Please, continue.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Thank you. And, Madam Speaker, the reason why I stressed on the fact that I did constitutional law and government and constitution at postgraduate level with a merit mark from the Queen Mary and Westfield College is because, one, it is no bogus qualification, something that the Member for Siparia attracted in large numbers when she was the Prime Minister in this country, one.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And, two, I have stood in this Parliament on diverse occasions, Madam Speaker, you will recall, and outlined—I do not think I ever heard any other Minister ever do that—what my responsibility and my duty to the Parliament, to the people and to the Cabinet is—

**Hon. Member:** Democracy.

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—several times. I know what my responsibility as a Minister of government is, and it does not include writing any crime plan for the police. I told them if they allow me to write a crime plan for the police, they self will turn around and say it is politically

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partisan.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** That is a matter for the police and ought not to be politicized, and that is my constitutional understanding of this. Notwithstanding that we at the Ministry of National Security have, and we live by a strategic plan, which has been invoked since 2018 to 2023, and is in the process of renewal now, as we speak, for the New Year.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** That is what guides us. Not for the police service alone, but for the entirety of the Ministry of National Security. I do not write no crime plan for the police. And he quoted Prof. Deosaran. The day after I said that and they started to make alarum in their ignorance, Prof. Ramesh Deosaran, entered the discussion and said the Minister was absolutely correct—

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—but he did not hear that. Madam Speaker, I was telling you, I came out of the university with my LLM, so skilled and qualified. And then, Madam Speaker, I became a Barrister at Middle Temple in London and came to Trinidad and Tobago, and was admitted to the Bar here as an attorney at law. I listened to a certain

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senior counsel, Israel Khan, tell the Member for Siparia, how she put her hand in the cookie jar and took a silk she did not deserve. I heard Israel Khan tell this country that she never do a foul case or a sore foot case. How she end up with that.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Speaker, 48(6).

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Not my words.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Take ownership of it.

**Madam Speaker:** Well, just now. Whether they are your words or not, you are speaking the words, so they become your words. Okay? So, yes, please, just be careful.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** So when I listened to Member for Siparia, telling me about incompetent, I know the Member gave herself—she added onto herself silk, shamelessly as a Prime Minister.

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

**Mr. Hosein:** Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Hosein:** Madam Speaker.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** That is the essence of—

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

**Mr. Hosein:** I am rising on a Standing Order. Madam Speaker 48(1), relevance and 48(8), this Motion is not about Siparia. This is about

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the Minister.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Member, overruled.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Thank you. This Motion is about me and that is my opinion on the basis of the facts in this country.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I entered politics in 1995 and I have been still this time, with the exception of the two-years when I was deselected in 2007 and returned to the Senate as an Opposition Senator in 2010, and it was the busiest in Opposition between 2010 and 2015, because every single Monday morning, the Member for Siparia, as Prime Minister, and that UNC had us busy with corruption in this country, every Monday morning. The first one that was broken, was when where there was a \$56 million contract repair the Siparia Market to a fella call Krishna Lala, who went out with the largest contribution in this country.

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Speaker, 48(8). This Motion is not about the Opposition.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** We are talking about crime and we are talking about the—

**Ms. Ameen:** We are talking about the incompetence of the Minister

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of National Security.

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

**Madam Speaker:** So, Member, I will allow you some of that. I think if I understand what you are doing, you are setting out your fitness for purpose. Okay? But, one, I want you to, while you may be doing that with some comparisons, I would ask you to condescend on what this is. You took ownership of the Motion. Okay? So, continue to focus on the ownership part.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, and when we went into Government in 2001, I served in the Ministry of Public Administration, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and Minister in the Ministry of National Security. I chaired the Joint Select Committee on National Security for many years. I say all of that to have you know—and I was present as chairman of that joint select committee, when the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, having become Prime Minister in 2015, commissioned the manpower audit—the human resource audit of the police service, of which Prof. Deosaran was the chairman, and then I interrogated, along with the rest of the committee, that manpower audit report. And I am therefore saying all of that to tell you, I am quite familiar with the affairs of the police service and the Ministry of National Security. Very much

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aware.

While at the Office of Attorney General, serving under the substantive Attorney General, then Faris Al-Rawi, the Member for San Fernando West, I took it upon myself, inside of there, for the two years I spent there, and reviewed and reworked the Socially Displaced Persons Act.

**3.15 p.m.**

I also looked at the Trespass Act because there were people approaching citizens in this country with threats, and with guns, and firebombing their house, and firebombing their car, including HDC apartments, chasing out tenants. I undertook the project to rework the Trespass Act, so when I hear the Member talking about home invasion, we dealt with that when I was in the Office of the Attorney General.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Today trespassing and using force to extrude people from their property or their land is a criminal offence. Prior to that it was a civil offence; the police tell you, “Go and file a private action”. I did that. I also drafted a private security Bill which is on the Order Paper. We went to joint select committee with it. They sat quietly.

They went through everything and when we came back on the

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floor of the Parliament they took objection to it in their unusual unprincipled obstructive way. And then, Madam Speaker, I also drafted a very critical piece of legislation—

**Mr. Ratiram:** Madam Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48(6), please.

**Madam Speaker:** Minister.

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—a very critical piece of legislation, because part of what Deosaran identified in that Manpower Audit report was that the public had lost confidence in some elements of policing because there were officers who were acting in ways contrary to the ethos, the spirit, the training, the soul of the police service which I know as a former policeman and police instructor. And therefore, I took the trouble to draft, along with the professionals, the legal drafts people, a Bill which will permit the routine integrity testing of not only police officers but the defence force, the Customs, the Immigration, Inland Revenue, and certain elements of the Registrar General's Department. We did that.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Because the services are as good and as integrity-possessed as the individuals who populate them, because in this country we have seen where Cabinets were infiltrated by white collar

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criminals, and we have seen in this Parliament where people of all kind of—of all manners of ilk end up in this Chamber, Madam Speaker.

When I know I had difficulty being a PNM MP, not because my resume was not colourful, not because my reputation was intact, but it had to do with the fact that just my dreadlocks alone; that is only to tell you in the PNM our standards are different—

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—and integrity matters, and no person on the PNM side with a criminal charge on \$1 million bail could sit—

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—on this side of the House!

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. So, Member, I hear your passion but I think I could hear very well with a little lower volume.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Please.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Thank you.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Madam Speaker, when the UNC was in government—they are talking about confidence, when the UNC was in government we had acting commissioners of police evermore. One

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of the things this Government did in response to public concerns and in response, more specifically, to issues within the police service, we appointed a substantive police commissioner.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** We did that, that is item number one. Madam Speaker, that Commissioner of Police, you would have heard the Member for Barataria/San Juan, that Commissioner of Police, carrying out her duty as leader of the police service, working with her executive and the entire police service, based on their knowledge, their experience, their qualification, their training, they designed a violent crime reduction plan.

**Mr. Charles:** “Dat eh wuking.”

**Hon. F. Hinds:** You hear the Member for Naparima, “Dat eh wuking”?

**Mr. Charles:** “It eh wuking.”

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Madam Speaker, one of the important roles of a Prime Minister is to select persons and my Prime Minister is a sober-thinking professional politician—

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—and educated man of integrity. When the Member for Siparia was Prime Minister, they want this Minister of National

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Security to go. Since we are in office in three years we had Mervyn Dillon, the Member for Point Fortin; we had Stuart Young, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, and now we have Fitzgerald Hinds, Member for Laventille West. When they were in Government, the Member for Siparia, they changed about eight Ministers of National Security in five years.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And, Madam Speaker, one of them was a certain fella called, Gary Griffith, and that Member for Siparia had to fire him. Did she have confidence in him? And why did she, because he, according to the record, and I have questions about it but I "aint" going into it—

**Mr. Ratiram:** Madam Speaker—

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—but according to the record—

**Mr. Ratiram:** Madam Speaker—

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—he was prepared—he was prepared to—[*Inaudible*]

**Mr. Ratiram:** Madam Speaker, I rise on Standing Order—

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—Attorney General—

**Mr. Ratiram:** Madam Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48(5), please. That is in respect to a Member, Madam.

**Madam Speaker:** No. Again, I do not understand the issue. We

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have said repeatedly that it is artificial to always say, the Member, the Member, the Member, and we are all here present. There was a lot of “he” earlier on, nobody rose, because again it is artificial. So somebody cannot stand up and make an entire contribution and talk about “he”, “she”, but it has to be populated in accordance with the Standing Order; also, it depends on context. Okay? So I overrule. Member, you have a Standing Order you want to raise?

**Mr. Charles:** Yes.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes.

**Mr. Charles:** I want to rise on Standing Order 48(8), it is not about “she” or the Member for—

**Madam Speaker:** No. No. No. Well, that is where I will say—

**Mr. Charles:** It is about not about the Opposition.

**Madam Speaker:** You, please, Member for Naparima, that is where I would say that you cannot use the word. You are offending the very Standing Order.

**Mr. Charles:** No. No. [*Inaudible*]

**Madam Speaker:** You are offending the very Standing Order, so you can stand up, correct your point and make it.

**Mr. Charles:** It is not—it is 48—I rise on 48(8), this is not about the Opposition Leader or the Member for Siparia, it is about the

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incompetence of the Minister of National Security.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. So I overrule on the particular Standing Order.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Madam Speaker—

**Madam Speaker:** What I would say, Member, remember, and that would be Standing Order 48(1), I believe what the Member for Naparima wants to raise is relevance—all right?—

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:**—and to a certain extent, I am seeing you making comparisons, but, again, I am bringing you back to the crux of this Motion.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Yeah. This thing, this debate, as I understood it, it is about the removal of a Minister of National Security and they came aplenty on the other side. I just wanted to say, one of them was a certain fella called, Jack Warner, and the Member for Siparia and the UNC had confidence in him.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Madam Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48(1) once more, the relevance of the contribution. This Motion is not about Mr. Jack Warner but it is about the performance of the Minister of National Security.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Overruled.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** When at the time of his appointment the world had an interest in him, and as we speak today there are international warrants for his arrest. He was in the Cabinet chosen with confidence by the Member for Siparia—

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—well known to the local, regional and international team. And I am making the point, what Dr. Rowley looks for in a Minister of National Security to have confidence, because the Member for Barataria/San Juan asked, “What is it”? What Dr. Rowley looks for is not the same thing that the Member for Siparia looks for.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** There were some decent ones among them; one, Carl Alfonso, and one, John Sandy. I always wondered what they were doing there, but that is another story. All together, about eight of them.

It is one of them, a Minister of National Security in whom Siparia had confidence told this country that the Member for Siparia enjoyed four-day weekends. Now, Madam Speaker, when you accuse

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me of incompetence—

**Mr. Lee:** Again—

**Hon. F. Hinds:**—you cannot—they accuse me—

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48(1)—

**Hon. F. Hinds:** It is confidence we are talking about.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. So, Member, Minister of National Security, particularly in the point you are going on, I uphold the objection—

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Thank you very much.

**Madam Speaker:**—raised by the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** One of the organizations in National Security is our Strategic Services Agency, a very critical legislative-backed, independent intelligence-gathering unit of National Security. It falls under the purview of the Minister of National Security, and I can tell you, notwithstanding the accusations of incompetence, I would never have overseen, and neither would my Prime Minister, the appointment of a 23-year-old clerk with absolutely no experience in that business, displacing experienced intelligence operators. That was a decision from the UNC. I would not do that and yet want to accuse me of incompetence. I would not have it. I would not have it. And by the way, if I say, “Resmi Ramnarine”, in this country, they would not

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recognize it, name changed to Shashi Rehka by deed poll. People in this country—

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Speaker, 48(1), why is the Minister dragging somebody into it, outside of this Parliament into the debate?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** 48(1)—[*Inaudible*]

**Madam Speaker:** No. No. So, again, up to this point I understood where you are going. All right. You have made a particular point which is relevance; I find where you are going, I uphold the objection raised by the Whip, please come back on track.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. And, Madam Speaker, crime is not only about red blood street crime and murders, crime is also about white collar crime, and today, as I grapple with crime as Minister of National Security Council, responsible, as I have said a million times for public safety and security in Trinidad and Tobago, guided by this strategic plan and as well the mandate given by the people to this Government which we shape into policy positions, which we feed into the organizations under our purview, including the police service, I have to live in this country today to see a former Commissioner of Police in front of the court, using what the Constitution allows, challenging the very constitutionality of a law to protect this country from white collar crime. That is one of the

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challenges we face because some of them use the law. They use the office they hold. They use all manners of ways to get information to carry on and constantly wage war against the State, and therefore, Madam Speaker, all of this a Minister of National Security has to grapple with in the scheme of things.

Madam Speaker, we came to this Parliament while I was Minister of National Security and before, with legislation to assist, because the one thing the Member for Barataria/San Juan said is that this is an ecological system, all the pieces come together, articulate together, so therefore our legislative agenda is very critical in our fight against crime.

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

**3.30 p.m.**

So in the context of the legislative agenda, we came here with whistleblower legislation, the UNC objected to it. We came here with anti-gang legislation to rein in the criminal gangs and to allow the police more time to conduct their gang investigations, and to get inside of their finances and all of that—I already told you that some of their friends are challenging the very constitutionality of the financial laws to deal with white-collar crime. And now I am telling you—

**Mr. Hosein:** Madam Speaker, 48(2). Is this matter sub judice that

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the Member is referring to?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And now I am telling you, I am moving on, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** It is either you are raising sub judice or you are not.

**Mr. Hosein:** Madam Speaker, the Member referred to a matter being in court so that is why I raised the Standing Order.

**Madam Speaker:** [*Inaudible*]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Madam Speaker, I am moving on. We also came here with anti-gang law to strengthen our fight, the police's fight, against the gangs. The UNC refused it. It reverted back to the 1994 laws for bail in this country, not assisted by the fact that the courts are now granting bail to people who commit the capital offence of murder.

**Mr. Hosein:** Alleged to have committed. There is a presumption of innocence.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Madam Speaker, last night I received a call from a citizen, quite late, who offered his wisdom in terms of advice to me as to what we have to do to deal with crime in this country. And I have a listening ear to all, because wisdom comes in the simplest places, sometimes in the nick of time. But he told me last night that—and I

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verily believed it to be true, based on intelligence information available to me—a lot of the killing that we are seeing is revenge killing. And part of that is because those who seek revenge and take the law into their own hands, encouraging murders, feel as though the criminal justice system is not according them the support they deserve.

**Madam Speaker:** Minister, the original speaking time is now spent. You have 15 minutes extra to wind up your contribution. You may proceed.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Thank you. We in National Security have focused heavily on illegal guns and their retrieval, taking them out. We had a crime symposium here, treating crime as a public health issue recently, and every single leader of the Caribbean made the point that they are going through the same situation, for the same reasons in their respective countries.

Only yesterday I received a report from the Small Arms Survey, working along with CARICOM IMPACS, and the Mines Advisory Group, where they did a study of the prevalence, the use, the distribution, the importation, the abuse—because it is not only illegal guns. You can abuse a legal one too. Therefore, we are focused on illegal guns because we believe if we rid the society, we cleanse the

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society of illegal guns, a lot of the fatalities we read about on a daily basis will be no more.

Gangs and drugs: a lot of the fighting, from information available to me, is over turf, drugs, business deals gone bad. But the police have a duty, gang or no gang, turf wars, business deals gone sour for drugs—the police have a duty, and they have accepted and they know that, to impose themselves in the middle of that, keep the gangs apart and dismantle the gangs in the context of the violence reduction plan that the Commissioner shared with us.

Murders are indeed alarming. All I could say, I am very, very saddened at it. It is bloody, it is traumatic. But, Madam Speaker, when you listen to the Member for Barataria/San Juan, you would believe all of that started in 2015, and more than that it started when I became Minister of National Security. But I have piles of newspapers with headlines from 1995 to 2001, and more than that, from 2010 to 2015, and I shared convivially with a friend recently, that the headlines today are no different to the ones I saw aplenty when the UNC was in government.

We have been a violent society for a very long time, but now with automatic weapons, which the crime symposium yielded a decision on the part of the leaders to ban the presence of assault

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weapons in whole region—and then you hear some foolish people talking about “dey” banned already. Time would not permit, all I can say is that it is foolish.

The Prime Minister said assault weapons. The law prohibits automatic weapons, and an assault weapon is typically one with a rifled barrel used by the military, discharging 5.56 and 7.62, meaning military grade ammunition. And while they may be semi-automatic—especially when a certain commissioner allowed people with your semi-automatic weapon to import a component part, which you can put into the weapon and convert it to an automatic weapon—the Prime Ministers of the region realized, and they have come to the position, that that kind of military hardware ought to be in the hands of the military and not among the civilian population, hence the announcement made by the Prime Minister. But some dumbos, “dey doh want to hear dat”, they started to rant and rave in typical fashion about it.

**Dr. Seecheran:** Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(4), use of offensive and insulting language.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I did not call anyone in here that.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Yeah but that language is unparliamentary, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Continue.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Thank you very much. Madam Speaker, the question of home invasions—yes, very traumatic. One of the reasons why I did not say this before, because I know it will bring no comfort to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, it will bring no comfort to the victims of home invasions, but the facts on the statistics reveal—I never said it before today. And the reason—let me repeat why I did not say it, because I know it is traumatic when they come in your home, knowing you are there, or if they come and they realize you are there, they carry on, abusing members, like the 15-year-old boy. Madam Speaker, the facts and the statistics shown to me show that we have less of those this year than last year, but that is not an answer. Every one of them is dangerous, unwanted. I was quite proud that the police, by virtue of the direct targeted active patrols that they have put in place, on every occasion of those last four in-home invasions, they were able to intercept the criminals leaving the scene, engaged them.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Unfortunately, in three of the events, one person in each of those events died, and on the fourth one a man was shot. He still lived, but the police were able to arrest every one of them, and I want to congratulate the police service for that.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** The Member talked about vehicles. I visited the police where they keep their derelict vehicles and items of evidence, and again in my job as a problem solver, quietly, quietly, we have set about to adjust that. In 2021, not only did we buy two brand new vessels for the coast guard to improve our boarder security—because mopping up guns and not stopping them from coming in is a problem but white-collar crime is a problem too, you know, because you have persons in the Customs and persons working in private courier firms who are encouraging and doing it as part of the well-oiled criminal enterprise, of which a former learned judge coined some time ago—well-oiled criminal enterprise. Therefore, you would notice, Madam Speaker, the transnational Organised Crime Unit of the police service, and others, have been making serious advances and incursions, getting into the illegal guns, and all of the porous areas of our border. That is what is going on.

Therefore, home invasions are not recorded as home invasions, eh. They are either burglaries, if they happen after 8.00p.m., housebreaking and larceny—and if they break the house and they enter, and they use force on the victims inside the house, that is robbery with violence, robbery with aggravation, as the case might be,

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and that is what we loosely call “home invasions”.

So I told you what we did to amend the law, and I told you how the police are positioning itself to respond to them. I can tell you from the police crime plan, they will continue to focus on it. And just like we did with kidnapping, when I was Minister in the Ministry of National Security in the mid-2000s, we will break it. We will fight it.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And I support the Commissioner of Police. I support the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, with their violent crime reduction plan. And I can tell you, last year I provided the police service with about 125 vehicles. When we discussed the situation today, they indicated that they need more vehicles, as well the defence force, which plays a critical role in support of the police service, Madam Speaker. Therefore, I was mandated by the Prime Minister to ensure, through the Ministry of Finance, that they get the resources they need to carry on in this the fight against transnational crime.

So, Madam Speaker, those who I work with in National Security, those who work with me will know what we do. As I said to this Parliament before, 85 per cent of what we do cannot be spoken of, if you are serious about this business. But I give you the assurance, as I close, I have confidence in the police service. I know they have it

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within themselves. This is why, out of sight, every single day I approve applications or requests for training to build muscle in the police service, in all areas of policing.

I told this Parliament earlier today, even in terms of responding to bombs and bomb threats, I, as Minister, oversaw the training of six more officers of the police Special Branch recently, on their request and recognizing the need. Hear “de” Member for Siparia, “55 schools”. She did nothing about that when she was there—nothing.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** So, Madam Speaker, one of the—

**Mr. Ratiram:** Madam Speaker, I rise on Standing Order—

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Time has run out. Time has run, but I can tell you—

**Mr. Ratiram:** Madam Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48(5), please.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, continue.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Thank you very much. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that the police Homicide Bureau, dealing with these murders, which they accept, many of them are preventable, so they are going upstream, working hard at targeting priority offenders, trying to take the guns away from them, dismantle the gangs. All of those things are efforts to prevent murders. But when they are committed, I am

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seeing—and time does not now permit—I am seeing improvements in their detection capacity and their solve rate. I am seeing that.

So let me share very quickly some of the statistics in this regard, and that came because of work I personally undertook with the Forensic Science Centre, which was a major problem. But you know what? Today, you “doh” see “no” bodies piled up there Monday morning again. You know what? The Homicide Bureau is reporting that when they want evidence analyzed, they are getting it in two and three days. That is happening.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** We had a press conference recently where the homicide leader said that, and the Forensic Science Centre said never in its experience did he see so much attention and resources going into there. But yet “de wet behind de ear” Saddam Hosein jumps here today, the Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Lee:** No, no, no.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** The Member for Barataria/San Juan—

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Speaker, 48(5).

**Hon. F. Hinds:** The Member for Barataria/San Juan “jump up” here today, and “find” himself so awkwardly ignorant, criticizing the presence of work.

**Mr. Lee:** No, no, no, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** “Ignorant” meaning lack of knowledge.

**Madam Speaker:** I know, but in the context—

**Hon. F. Hinds:** All right, Madam Speaker, awkwardly unknowing, empty, awkwardly empty. So let me just read for you quickly. Persons charged in 2023 for 2023 murders, 22, representing 24 murders solved in 2023. Persons charged in 2023 for 2022 murders, nine. Persons charged in 2023 for 2021 murders, one. Persons charged in 2023 for 2020 murder, one, and so the story goes.

They solved a murder—the police have a Cold Case Unit, where they bring some retired detectives “who teaching de younger ones” investigative experience and skills, reviewing old cases, interviewing witnesses, going back and looking at the evidence. They solved a murder recently that took place in 2016, and I am encouraged by that. My duty, as I have stated oftentimes, is to provide them with the resources they need—the training, the manpower, the resources they need, in the Forensic Science Centre, in the police service. And, Madam Speaker, with that said, I am confident—confident that we are going somewhere. So I will reject this Motion, and reject the submissions made by the Member for Barataria/San Juan.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And my colleagues who will come after me will demonstrate what we mean when we say, we take a whole-of-government, whole-of-society, and now whole-of-region approach, because a lot of the crime they are talking about has transnational origins, has beginnings outside of Trinidad, whether “is” guns, whether “is” drugs, whether “is” victims of human trafficking, which the Member for Couva North would probably be able to elucidate upon.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.

**3.45 p.m.**

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

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

**Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche East):** Madam Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to join this debate.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Madam Speaker, I am seldom lost for words, but how do you begin to respond to a political lunatic, is what—I am confronted—

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

**Mr. Hinds:** I rise—

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** I am not accusing you of being a political lunatic.

**Mr. Scotland:** Madam Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48(6), 48(4).

**Madam Speaker:** I know Member you can find another way.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Madam Speaker, let me strain myself to say, it is difficult—

**Mr. Hinds:** [*Inaudible*]thief!

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Madam Speaker, it is difficult, what is that vagrant doing on his legs?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Speaker, 48(4), and I would ask that, through you, Laventille West withdraw that statement and apologise?

**Madam Speaker:** Yes.

[*Mr. Hinds starts to leave Chamber*]

**Madam Speaker:** Member no, no, you are here. I know you had your passions heightened in the box, now you are finished your contribution just kindly withdraw that word and you could then take your leave if you wish.

**Mr. Hinds:** I humbly withdraw, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you very much. Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. You see, Madam Speaker, we listened for 45 minutes or so to that, that, I cannot use that word

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either. We listened to him for 45 minutes or so and now when you have an opportunity to respond they run. They disappear.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Madam Speaker, the Minister of National Security today, the cheese stands alone, nobody will defend him.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Nobody will stand up in his favour. The Prime Minister has absented himself from the House today wilfully and deliberately so he cannot defend the Minister of National Security. Madam Speaker this is not a Motion of no-confidence in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. This is a matter of no-confidence in the Member for Laventille West.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** He is here to defend his tenure. And the Member for Barataria/San Juan, let me begin by thanking him on behalf of 1.3 million people for bringing the most timely, appropriate, accurate Motion to this House of no-confidence in the current Ministry of National Security. And the Member when he spoke instead of giving us policy and programmes, Madam Speaker, he spent all his time giving us a biography of himself as if he applying for another job, which he ought to.

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Madam Speaker, he referred to my colleague from Barataria/San Juan on several occasions as wet behind the ear and so on. Let me remind you for the record, the Member for Barataria/San Juan has eight O level subjects. Forget whatever else he has. When you entered the police force you had school leaving, that mean you leave school. So we are not talking about university and Masters and PhD now, we are talking about school leaving. There was a time to enter the police service, in fact not the police service, SRP spells Something Resembling Police. You had to have school leaving, and people boasting today about their qualifications because they had school leaving to become something resembling police. And if you stay long enough you become police of some kind.

Madam Speaker, this Motion of no-confidence is not on the Member for Siparia. They have, the Member for Laventille West has this obsession, this paranoid, pathological obsession with the Member for Siparia, which he should be cured by those professionals in psychiatry.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** That requires medical and psychological help. That is not a political issue. Every line had to do with Siparia this,

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Siparia that. This is not a Motion on Siparia. This is not a Motion on any Member of the Opposition. It is not a Motion on Oropouche East either, because they will want to come and talk about Oropouche East, and Oropouche “dis and dat and dat”.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** That is fine, you could do anything you want. This is about crime. This is about the Minister of National Security, his perform in office.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** You know what is the shameful outcome so far here; shameful, is that the people who are in their homes, who are in their communities, who are in their villages, do they feel safer after hearing the Minister of National Security?

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Do you feel safer? If you had in your mind to leave this country did you change your mind after hearing Laventille West?

**Hon. Member:** No.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** You will fly to Port of Spain Monday morning to look for a visa. Go online tonight to get a ticket so you and your family could leave. And you see I want to begin with that point, we

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do not understand, unlike other Ministries, National Security is almost something sacred, dealing with the security of citizens.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are families in this country that are considering, they are weighing the pros and cons, they are balancing their arguments every single hour, whether they should leave this country. Many of those people are critical human resources that a country needs for development. You look throughout the world, look throughout the world, and some of us have had the opportunity to study elsewhere, and to live among people from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and other places. And when people leave their country it is not because they hate their country, they are unpatriotic, they do not like this country. They love their country. In fact people leave their country and put up a national flag in their yard, which they do not do in their own country. They love their country. But they leave because their country do not love them. Because their country cannot protect them.

And today citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, when they look on and this crime on what was happening today as well they are taking decisions whether or not to leave, and many of them are critical resources that you need for development. In our partner in CARICOM territory of Guyana, today they are very fortunate, they

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have found new wealth in the form of minerals and in the form of the extractive industries, gas and oil and so on. But today they are also in a bind, because their critical human resources have left as a result of years of discrimination, and racism, and poor governance. They have left. And crime—they have left. There was a time in Georgetown you used to be called “choke and rab” because you cannot walk there, people left. Today those people are needed to help develop a country that has wealth.

Trinidad and Tobago is a wealthy country by definition. We need all our human resources to develop. And if you chase people away with crime you will be left with a country where you do not have human resources.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the importance of this debate. The Prime Minister must understand from his years of experience that he needs all the resources of this country, and you cannot chase them away with a chronologically incompetent Minister of National Security.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Chronologically incompetent. Today the Minister comes and gives his biography. This is not a day to tell us what school you want to. How much degree and qualification. This is a

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day to tell us what you are doing to stop murder.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Home invasion, serious crime. What are you doing to stop that? This is a day to tell us that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me remind people because they may have forgotten after hearing Laventille West; 2016, in fact 2015, if you want to start there, 420 murders; 2016, 462; 2017, 495; 2018, 517; goes on and on. When we reach to 2022 over 600murders in this country. Today you must tell us what is the plan? What you are doing. This is what this debate is for. This debate is not to tell us your biography and what you do and what school you went to and what you participated in. Then all of us could spend whole day talking about our curriculum vitae. This is not the purpose.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** And the Minister of National Security came with that. There was a recent crime symposium in Port of Spain at the Hyatt, as a responsible Opposition the Member for Siparia led us to attend the opening session, for which we were invited.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** We were only invited to the open session. When it was finished, we responsibly took our leave. The Member for

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Laventille West jumped up to say, Members of the Opposition went for photos op and they leave after. That is when we were invited for. And put the record on that.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** What was amazing with that crime symposium, it was called “Crime as a Public Health Issue”. You know after two days and \$1.5 million spent there was not one resolution on crime as a public health issue. None!

And I was there early in the morning waiting, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Those of us who come from south will understand, when you come from south you are generally earlier than the person who come from Port of Spain, because we take extra effort to come up. And I was waiting outside the Hyatt. You know what struck me? All the Ministers, Prime Ministers and so on reached there, they have 20 body guards, 30 body guards, 10 body guards, special branch, defence force intelligence, defence force officers, they come to discuss the security of ordinary citizens with seven body guards, bullet proof van. Today in this meeting, in this sitting I call upon the Prime Minister to remove security from every Minister and let them experience what ordinary citizens’ experience.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** When we go to the mall, when we go to the market, when we are on the street, when we pick up our children we have no armed security with us. The Ministers must experience that. Today there is another crisis with the police, and I will come to it immediately. We warned about certain appointments. Police officers today, instead of spending time on the streets, hitting the streets, patrolling the streets, they go every weekend to Mayaro as an entourage with those in high office. They put a tent on the street in Mayaro and have police officers in a white tent without proper washroom facilities, without food or light beverage or whatever, because they are on the streets in Mayaro, because high officers of the State are going to Mayaro every weekend to frolic and recreate. That is what we do. That is what we talk about, the use of human resources. Police officers in a tent in Mayaro, because they have to protect office holders, because they have to go Mayaro every weekend so they could frolic in the sand.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member took umbrage when we informed him that given the crisis with forensic science DNA test and so on that the courts are waiting for, for years, he goes now to commission a 40-foot container. That is what they were doing, commissioning a 40-foot container, and that is his source of

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achievement and pride. And hear what, he proud of that, but that was a combination of a help from the United States, Canada and three or four other countries, to get a container. That is something when you are building a bridge or a road, you put at the side of the road for the office. You get that and you put it at the side of the road for the office. That is his signal achievement. That is his achievement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member had one or two other statements there, accusing the Opposition, and I want to tell you something, if ever you wanted to know the future of this country politically, you get it today. Imagine the Minister not talking about his policies, asking us about our policy. You know why? Because they are now an Opposition in waiting.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** They are an Opposition in waiting. We are the Government in waiting and they are the Opposition in waiting. That is what they want to know, what we doing. The Leader of the Opposition made a brilliant, innovative suggestion weeks ago, to create a special offence of home invasion. Because we know the element offences of home invasion as the Minister spoke about, and we believe that this is such a heinous crime that we must have a special offence with a high penalty of jail.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** And we have outlined that in the public domain.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** We have outlined that. And to incidentally indicate that those offences too should fit under a bail Act somewhere so persons who charged repeatedly for those offences in the home ought not to get bail under the bail legislation. The Member went on to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we did not—what? That we did not support the Government when—the PNM, sorry, he means the PNM, of course—they proposed crime fighting measures. You know the Prime Minister parrot the same nonsense all over the country?

**4.00 p.m.**

Listen, I have in my hand here a document and I challenge you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the UNC Opposition supported this Government with the Bail (Access to Bail) (Amdt.) Bill, 2017.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** We supported the Miscellaneous Provisions (Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, Proceeds of Crime, Financial Intelligence Unit of Trinidad and Tobago, Customs and Exchange Control), Bill, 2017. We supported the Miscellaneous Provisions (Supreme Court of Judicature and Children) Bill, 2018, made

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extensive amendments.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** We supported the Payments into Court, Bill, 2018, the Administration of Justice (Indictable Proceedings) (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill, 2019.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** We support that. The Firearms (Amdt.) Bill, 2019.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Opposition support was not needed but we supported it. Hear this one, we supported the Civil Asset Recovery and Management and Unexplained Wealth Bill, 2019.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Because you know, these—I go to say “these people”—but those on the other side, the honourable people on the other side they always throw in our face, we “doh” want to support white collar crime because you know, we have somewhere we know people involved in that and we do not want to support it. That is their narrative. And let us confront that narrative one time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I go to the courthouse, in Civil Court, regularly because people sue me. And do you know when people sue me it is because I speak out on white collar crime? The Government,

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this Government used a state enterprise called CEPEP to sue me because I spoke out on white collar crime.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** A financier of the PNM and friend of the Prime Minister has me in court now because I raised the issue of white collar crime. The documentation is in the court and when that court matter is done I will bring the documentation in the Parliament. I will bring it—

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:**—because when you read that, involving the HDC, well, you will fall off your seat when you see that one. I cannot say too much about it, the matter is in court and I mean, I do not want to. But that will bowl you over when you get the documents that we have been able to get through freedom of information, a legislation passed by the UNC as well. So, “doh” come today with this kind of rubber talk about civil this and white collar crime and we “fraid” this, we “fraid” nothing. The Government did a civil case, we call it a PNM case, put my name on a case, that is a PNM case that is not a police case, that is PNM. And one day the PNM will deal with that too. But they want to frighten everybody on this side that we have this—I want to tell you something, we are not cocoa farmers, we have no cocoa in

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the sun.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** So we talk big, we talk bold and we talk loud. And I will tell you something, I want to tell Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West because he is priming up to speak. I want to tell him that I have further information from the police and the DPP about the conduct of Government Ministers interfering in criminal prosecutions in this country.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** And Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West and others, we are not targeting Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West of course, will want to hear and will want to read the records where there are serious concerns raised about Government Members seeking to interfere in criminal proceedings and investigations. The DPP made a comment to that effect recently.

Let me continue, special majority Bills. This is the one I wanted you to hear, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The UNC Opposition supported the Tax Information Exchange Agreements (United States of America) Act, 2016, FATCA. This required a special majority. The UNC supported the Anti-Gang Act, 2018—

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:**—special majority; we supported the Insurance Act, 2016; the Anti-Terrorism (Amdt.) Act, 2018; the Licensing Committee (Validation) Act, 2018; the Bail (Amdt.) Act, 2019. What did we not support? We do not support the Member for Laventille West, that is what we do not support.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** And we have good reasons not to support him, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Member is boasting about his great work and, you know, he brought personality into it and I keep saying when you do a Motion of no confidence, try as you may, it is hard I know, but it is not about the person, it is about their tenure; their performance; governance; principles; it is not about the person. We have no—listen, the Member for Laventille West has been around a long time, a long time in the precincts of the Parliament. He is a veteran politician and some would say a tenacious politician as well. Over the years I have never found him to be a coward politician. In fact he has shown courage over the years. The only thing he runs from is water; that is the only thing I ever saw him running from, water. So he is not a stranger to the cut and thrust of politics, this is not about him, it is about his performance in office. This is what it is about. But he boasted about him, his personality and his honesty and integrity.

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Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have in my hand here civil claim form 2010, 02895 between Marlon McPherson and Fitzgerald Hinds defendant, an Order of Madam Justice Jones. This is a court order, I can read—this is in the public domain, I do not have to be fearful. The defendant Fitzgerald Hinds:

It is ordered that the defendant to purchase the said portion of the claimant's land encroached on by him in accordance with the survey plan of Brian Moses.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** He encroached on land and had to pay and must pay the price of \$84,393.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** “Land tief, land tief.”

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Well, some would say—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** No—

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** I did not hear carefully what that was.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** What did she say?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Members, please, please, right. Again, Member, you take total ownership for what you are stating?

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** [*Inaudible*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Yes, or no. No, I am just asking.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** I am taking ownership. I have in my hand here an Order of the court, encroached on land and has to pay \$84,393. If he had to pay one dollar more, then I am wrong, I am wrong. But this speaks to some issue of land grabbing of some kind. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, recently within recent times I have seen a document, it is on the Opposition Bench—somebody could bring it for me when I am talking, I am sure, where the Integrity Commission had reason to register against the Member for Laventille West because he failed to pay a fee at the Integrity Commission, recently, and they can bring it for me, I can read from it directly. But there was a fee you had to pay to the Integrity Commission for late filing. They put names in the newspaper and so on, and the Member apparently refused to and they published and registered against him, a debt against him. That alone should have called him in a proper Westminster Parliament to resign from office.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to come to another matter falling under the purview of this Minister and I deal with it under this Minister and this Minister alone, because the Minister's performance is up for inspection today, thanks to the Member for Barataria/San Juan. It is not the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, it is not the Member for San Fernando West, it is not any Member for

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Arouca/Maloney, it is the Member for Laventille West. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a judgment came out quite recently, I have the judgment in my hand, the judgment is 2022, 04567. And just for the record, the Integrity Commission in August 2022, a judgment registered on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January, 2023 against the Member for Laventille West—

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:**—for moneys. And talking today about this character and this integrity; respond to that. We had another Member earlier in the week I think he had to make an about turn when pressed from this side of the House about declaring a second long-distance removed cousin in a recusal. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Civil Appeal 2022, 04567 delivered by Justice Devindra Rampersad dated April 25, 2023. Fresh, Mr. Deputy Speaker, hot of the press, we have it here. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this deals in a nutshell with the claimant Mr. Brent Thomas, is now being called the Brent Thomas ruling, in which a firearm dealer was arrested and was taken from one jurisdiction to another by the police and so on, went to court and so on, to challenge search warrants, went to court to challenge the arrest.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is shocking what this judgment tells us, it is shocking. Mr. Justice Rampersad made certain observations

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about the conduct of the police in this matter, indicating that the police participated in a process of the illegal abduction of a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago in violation of his constitutional rights. Went to Barbados, the police, and abducted him, illegally brought him back to Trinidad and Tobago. The search warrants they are saying were illegal as well. Members of the Professional Standards Bureau ought to be dismissed, suspended and dismissed forthwith for breaching the rights of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago as the judgment outlined.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not the police I am really dealing with here today because the police as you know are under the command of a Commissioner of Police and the Commissioner of Police has an authority in that. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, under our laws the defence force is under the Minister of National Security, the defence force. Clearly the legislation speaks to that and it is very clear, I do not think anybody will trouble us to rebut that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the judgment it is stated that the defence force assisted the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service to fly to Barbados and to illegally abduct a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago and bring him back to Trinidad and Tobago to face charges and so forth, and the defence force participated with the Trinidad and Tobago Police, it is stated here. It is a multi-operational police sections,

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MOPs, as we know and the defence were involved in an operation to fly to Barbados and secure illegally, to detain and abduct the citizen of Trinidad and Tobago.

Today I call upon the Minister of National Security to indicate, did you approve of the participation of the defence force in the illegal abduction of Brent Thomas?

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Did you approve?—because no defence force aircraft can leave this country without the knowledge and/or authority and permission of a Minister of National Security. You cannot land on foreign jurisdiction, on foreign soil without some type of diplomatic interchange, exchange to ensure that the defence force has authority to go in that country and participate in what is effectively a police operation. So today the Minister of National Security must explain his role in the illegal abduction of a citizen of this country where the defence force was used with alongside the police in the jurisdiction of Barbados. And this is a matter—and just for the record I will state it here at paragraph 231:

On its own—and I quote the judge:

On its own the first claimant abduction in Barbados and his unceremonious and humiliating return to Trinidad as touted and

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broadly broadcast in a self-aggrandizing chest thumping press conference by the TTPS after his return is sufficient to justify to this court intervening in the criminal process to state those proceedings. However, there is more, there is more than just a court being unhappy with the behaviour of the police. When we looked at it there was a complete and utter stripping away of the first claimant's dignity and reputation.

That is what the defence force was involved in. And that leaves serious questions for a Minister of National Security; was he aware, did he authorize. Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are the questions, those are the questions that will now bother him. And he is not even in the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, today to get to a current affairs matter of the day, today there was an act of terror and the United National Congress, the hon. Opposition Leader and this United National Congress condemns with the full might before us, this act of terrorism against citizens and children.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Today there were children crying in the arms of their teachers and parents, traumatized by bomb scares and having to leave their lunchbox and their book bag in their class to collect

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tomorrow, Saturday. The Minister stood in the House in a flippant manner and dismissed it and was dismissive of that trauma of the children and their parents. And that is the reason why we are calling on him to be removed.

We asked him today, he gave us as usual the blanket stereotypical flippant response. This is a serious and grave matter involving cybercrime. Have you yet contacted our international partners to chase down, swiftly and bring to justice those who perpetuated this incident today, this dastardly act of terror? Today we should be working with our foreign partners to ensure we swiftly bring to harsh justice those who committed that act today. But the Minister is not speaking about that. He is saying, well, the fire service did its job and let me get to fire and police. Mr. Deputy Speaker, while we do have a bomb squad in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, I think we have a bomb squad in the fire service as well, we have also bomb technicians in other areas of the protective security sector.

**4.15 p.m.**

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not prepared as we, by definition, cannot be prepared for 50 bomb threats at the same time. That requires help and assistance. And you know what went through my

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mind today? Just Wednesday last in the question period, the Prime Minister in questioning, he said he tried to dismiss the suggestion, the recommendation, the policy recommendation of the Member for Siparia to divide national security into two arms, homeland security and defence. He tried to dismiss that, and you know what he said in dismissing? He “say” we are Trinidad and Tobago. We not like America. We “doh” have so much enemies around. You know, 48 hours later, 50 bomb threats. It is as if he is “blight”. Fifty bomb threats that we are not—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, the last term you used, I will probably use a different word.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Oh, yes, yes. I withdraw that term, of course. It is as “thoughhhh”, leave it like that. Mr. Deputy Speaker—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** [*Inaudible*]

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will press on.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member for Couva South, retract and let us move on, please. Quickly.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** The Member today—

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:**—defending his—

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Oh, sorry.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I retract, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** The Member today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in trying to salvage some iota of integrity—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Before you continue, Member, your initial speaking time has elapsed. You have an additional 15.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Much obliged.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Much obliged? Proceed.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, today, in trying to defend the indefensible, the Minister spoke and used his personal attire and hairstyle and so on, as if that is a defence. Mr. Speaker, I say absolutely nothing about that. We say nothing about that. That has nothing to do in this debate. It has to do with your competence or lack thereof.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** The Minister today was “bazodee” after Barataria/San Juan. He called the former Minister Edmund Dillon, Mervyn Dillon. Mervyn Dillon is a national cricketer, a West Indies player. So I am shocked he did not bring in Raphick Jumadeen, shocked he did not call Brian Lara’s name as well, but he was

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“bazodee” after hearing that contribution by the Member for Barataria/San Juan. Then comes to bring excuses, these are revenged killings. Whether it is revenged killings or not, it is killings.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** We cannot operate a society—Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a triple murder in Penal a few days ago and you saw vivid pictures and a video of three men stripped, lying on the ground in a pool of blood. Their heads, I believe, in a pool of blood. Whatever the circumstances, that is three citizens, three men lying in blood and it is murder. These things you see in war-torn countries.

When you are in a state of war, you see the militia and armed gangs moving around and executing people. In some countries, if you run away from the army and so on, they do that. This is Trinidad and Tobago. This is why we are saying that under this Government, this country is unpatrolled—this country is unpoliced. When we were in office we introduced the community policing patrols. They worked in suburb areas and areas and on so, to take the weight of the TTPS, so the TTPS could move more into hot spots and so on. They disbanded that. They said, “People making too much money. It is costing too much.” Could you put a cost on people’s lives? You cannot say,

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“This costing too much money,” and murders go up, and you have execution-styled murders taking place in this country. I do not know where some of my friends opposite live. They live in the sky.

This is a country today, if your dog bark three times, you fly out your bed. If a pin drop in the night, you “jump up”. This is Trinidad and Tobago. The country is unpatrolled and unpoliced under this inept and incompetent Minister of National Security—

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:**—and there is no more to be said about that than he ought to go. I believe now we have reached the stage where the Prime Minister’s pride is stopping him from removing this Minister. Can I remind the hon. Prime Minister in his absence that he removed this Member for Laventille West as Minister of Public Utilities, he removed this Member as Minister of Works of Transport? So what is the big deal removing him as Minister of National Security?

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Patrick Manning removed him as national something, rehabilitation. I think he rejected rehabilitation, both literally and figuratively.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Prime Ministers—his leaders have fired him from about five Ministries. One more will not make any

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difference to his career, but it will make a difference to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Minister today has this remarkable achievement about—he instils hopelessness. There are people who are in public life and they instil hope; they instil hope when they speak. There are leaders who do that, Ministers as well. He instils hopelessness. From the time you see him you get frighten because you know nothing will change. He will bring no policy suggestions and so on. That is why today he stands alone and could not have another Member stand and defend him. They will come after because they want to talk about Siparia, and Oropouche West, and others on this side. That is what they are about today. Listen, their game plan is easy—easy to understand.

Their game plan is, forget Laventille West today, focus on Siparia, Oropouche East; focus on Couva North; focus on Oropouche West; focus on Caroni East. That is their game plan, as if that will change anything Monday morning. Crime continues, and the Members opposite should speak to their Prime Minister. Do not speak in public. I mean, it might be against the party and so on, to speak in public. Have a private word with your Prime Minister and encourage

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him to fire Laventille West immediately. Encourage that.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** The Member comes today with another cock and bull story about banning assault rifles and telling us about the millimetre, and the led, and the this and the that. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Member has an obsession with taking legal guns off the streets. It is an obsession with taking legal guns off the street because they are not focusing on illegal guns.

Today, they hate to hear the Minister of National Security talking about the importance of border and border. What border? Scanners are not working. It is taking two years to fix scanners. The Member for Oropouche West raised that matter—two years to fix scanners at the port. Two mobile scanners were bought to the tune of roughly TT \$27 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The police have these two. Why do the police not start selling “sweet drink” or bread or something with those vans? They may use it, you know. They could use—the police have refused, having started a project, parked up on the highway near Grand Bazaar and checking every vehicle for ammunition. Because let us face it, the people who go for home invasion, for robbery, for murder, you are going to kill three men tonight, you are walking with and you are carrying in a vehicle

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firearms, generally illegal.

So if you have mobile scanners on the road at different places and so on, strategic points, intelligence driven, you can pick up some of that. You can detect that. You can prevent it. But no, the vans, the mobile police trucks, as they are, have been parked up for over a year. You know they cannot fix it. When we say is the problem fixing it? They say, “No, no, no, we have to train people. We cyah train people.” What is that? Had we been in office—well, the Member for Siparia would have insisted that not those two trucks, about 10 trucks were on the road as mobile scanners, picking up guns and ammunition, the illegal ones. We would have insisted on that.

Today, the police service is running by, stopping you and taking a flashlight with what?—an Eveready battery and looking in the trunk. That is what they are. Everybody, including the DPP, speaks about technology-driven police service. Today, when they stop you, they open the trunk and take a flashlight and look for what?—while you have mobile scanners purchased.

I am told the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West knows of my personal interest—well, I should not say personal interest because he will jump on that too—knows of my policy interest in the act of corruption that went on under his Ministry with

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procuring CCTV cameras. He knows that I know, and I know that he knows I know. He knows I know.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are informed reliably that the technology exists in CCTV cameras to do much more than it is doing now, and someone somewhere in authority is preventing the police and law enforcement from using the full resources that are available with the CCTV cameras—full resources. They have face recognition technology, they have licensing plate registration recognition technology. They may well have other technologies that I will not speak about. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know those are not working because someone does not want it to work. Tell us under this Minister how much CCTV cameras they have fixed, repaired. Tell us how much are working in Tobago. I raised this matter before. How many are working in Tobago, which also has serious problems with crime, not only in the tourism sector and so on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Tell us what is the plan.

Today, this day is to speak about policy, programme. What are you doing to bring relief? Will citizens wake up tomorrow morning, look at the newspaper clippings of today, listen to us live and feel confident that, “Look, let me change my mind. I want to remain here. I will remain. I will remain. Something is going to happen and let us

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hear the Government Minister of National Security. Let us hear others, if they are bold enough to speak in defence of him. Let us hear their plans”?

Today, it is not to speak about the UNC, it not to speak about the Leader of the Opposition, it is not to speak on Members this side. But that is their game, the blame game. You know, I find it took long for them not to put blame or something on the UNC for today’s events as well. I do not know what is taking you so long. “It coming. “Ah feel it coming. It coming. It coming”. Today, I want to put categorically on the record, we condemn, in the strongest possible voice, this act of terrorism.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** And had we been in office, the Member for Siparia and her national security council would have met in emergency session to deal with this matter—

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** And we would have met and taken strict action in collaboration with law enforcement to ensure that those who perpetrated this act, this dastardly act, are brought to justice swiftly and face the full brunt of the law. So we condemn that. For their trolls and whoever on social media—they have “pink head” people on

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social media and so on, writing rubbish and foolishness, suggesting that, “Oh, it happened on the day that the National Security Minister is facing a Motion of no confidence, so we had to add this and add that.” These are people who the only thing they add is their salary from the Ministry of Finance, which they receive every month to attack the UNC.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** And I want to tell you, I will put them on warning as well, it is the will of God and the will of the people that we are returned to office, and we will go in the record and find out how much that “pink head” person is making and ask her to pay it back to the taxpayers.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to speak about one matter in closing—how much minutes I have again you think?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** You conclude at 4.32.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the five minutes, one or two matters again.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of National Security has this other unremarkable trait. When he speaks, he says everything is happening, but you do not know what is happening. But we know

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crime is happening, but we do not know what else is happening to stop crime. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is a line from *Get Smart* or something, or the *Pink Panther* series or something. That is not for reality. That is not for Parliament. That is not for politics here, to tell us we do not know what is happening. We know three murders are happening. We know home invasions are happening. We know bomb threats are happening. He said 85 per cent, I cannot tell you, we cannot speak of it, we cannot speak—so he is only talking about 15 per cent and 85, they cannot tell us. But I want to tell you something, we already know the 85 per cent. Nothing is happening. Nothing is happening.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** And when you speak to his colleagues, they will tell you they have no confidence in him. The Member for Barataria/San Juan alluded to that. His own colleagues tell you they have no confidence in this Minister, and we are looking strongly—I mean, we are looking honestly and sincerely to find an achievement of this Minister—honestly. I mean, if there would be one, please point it out to us urgently so we can actually look at it and so on.

Today, in closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member today presented himself on one of the darkest and saddest day in the history

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of Trinidad and Tobago, when children became directly and indirectly a victim of crime and terror. Today was a day the Member should have stood out as the Minister of National Security leading the charge, outlining policy and programme and action for the next 48 hours. In fact, strange enough, in a warped way, he had an issue today. He could have brought leadership to the crisis the country faced even today and he did not. He could not. He relied on inelegant language. He relied on rhetoric. He relied on personality attacks and so on, instead of bringing hope to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have been there. Let me remind you. It is this UNC partnership administration that reduced serious crimes to the lowest in 35 years.

**4.30 p.m.**

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** If I had more time I would read it, it is in my hand. We reduced crime and we did that because we had not just one, we had the National Operations Centre, Community Comfort Patrols, we had resourced the police service. We were in office, if a crime was committed and you reported it, in 10 minutes, “five police car reach by yuh house”. There was a time when we had crime somewhere in San Fernando, “they report it, five police car, somebody call me, they

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say it have five ah Kamla police car in front”. We bought police cars, we bought resources and gave to the police service.

The Member for Siparia as Prime Minister, I joined her and others, when we went to the Inter-Agency Task Force headquarters along the Churchill Roosevelt Highway somewhere around San Juan and she gave a pep talk to members of the army and the police telling them go out this minute, patrol the communities, the villages, the societies, the towns, the cities and so on and ensure that you reduce the level of crime, lawlessness and fear among the population.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Where is that leadership today? They will come now and attack everybody on this side and a, b, c. “Lemme puh it” to you this way. You have been in office for eight years coming up, eight years, if you still have to go back to 2015, it means you are completely lost and hopeless. Completely lost and hopeless.

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

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** And the people do not want to hear about 2015 and 2010 and section this and Reshmi that and so on. They do not want to hear about that. You think if somebody—a victim of home invasion wants to hear you talk about Reshmi this and Reshmi that and what is her new number and name? That is foolishness and I condemn that,

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Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I condemn this Government, as I stand proudly, stand tall in support of my colleague from Barataria/San Juan who has had the tenacity and the courage to lay on the Parliament Order Paper one of the most important Motions facing the Parliament and the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I thank you very much.

**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, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The reality is that every concerned citizen of Trinidad and Tobago is affected by the ills of crime and criminality and no one in the Government hides from that fact or is afraid to confront that fact. Those of us in the Government, especially the elected Members, all the elected Members of Parliament on this side are very aware of the ill effects of crime and criminality on our society, on our constituents and on our country.

I sit next to the Member of Parliament, in this House, for Laventille West, who currently holds the portfolio of Minister of National Security and I give the assurance that that Member falls squarely into the category of Government Members that I have just described. The Minister of National Security, the hon. Member for Laventille West, is very much concerned about the

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state of crime and criminality in Trinidad and Tobago. In the many sleepless nights that I am certain he has, as he puts forward his best efforts and gives all and to the best of his ability in doing what he must to provide leadership in the fight against crime. I start off by putting that squarely on the record.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, no sensible, civic-minded citizen including, of course, I hope, all of the elected Members of Parliament of this House should be satisfied with the disregard for laws that are currently being reflected. And when I say currently, I do not mean only at this moment, within the last five years, within the last 10 years, I will hazard to say within the last two decades. No civic-minded citizen would be satisfied with the disregard for our laws of Trinidad and Tobago that we are seeing from the criminals and criminal element in Trinidad and Tobago.

And having said that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also take the opportunity as a concerned citizen, as a concerned parent, to condemn and to put on record to be recorded in the *Hansard* on today's date, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April, 2023 when we were all faced, especially as parents, this morning with what is a criminal act and I condemn the individual or individuals who saw it fit to wage an act of terror on our school children this morning, on the parents this morning, on the law-abiding

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citizens today as they had this baseless, senseless, heartless act of sending messages to various schools throughout Trinidad and Tobago in a bomb threat manner, forcing our young citizens, our children to be faced with the disruption and us as parents to be faced with the fear and apprehension as what this could bring and that is the position of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. We condemn wholeheartedly and with every ounce of ourselves this cowardly attack that took place on our nation's schools, our teachers, our children and parents today. So to listen to all the rantings and the ravings and the screaming as we just have, let that message not be lost.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I was considering how to contribute productively to this debate here today as opposed to what we have just witnessed, not surprisingly which was a very personalized attack on everybody, everybody under the sun in a most scandalous manner, I want to record that that type of behaviour and contribution takes the country of Trinidad and Tobago nowhere but backwards.

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

**Hon. S. Young:** That type of contribution when you stand up and all you hear for 45 minutes is a personalized attack on the Member opposite, in this case, the hon. Member of Parliament for Laventille

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West and you try to predict what the sensible contributions on this side would be, and to countermand it in the manner which we have just heard is also something that I condemn.

Because you see what we are called upon to do as parliamentarians and in particular as elected Members of parliamentarians and through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the population understands what I am speaking about and I take the opportunity to just remind that we were elected by the people of Trinidad and Tobago to represent them and today the issue we are dealing with is crime and criminality, even though the Motion is couched in a manner to attack a certain Member amongst us who has been given the unenviable and difficult task of carrying the portfolio of Minister of National Security. And I can speak from personal experience because I carried that on my shoulders for just under three years.

But what we as citizens must face and what we must discuss and what we must confront is how do we deal with crime and criminality, and it is my submission here today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, through you, that to productively do so, one of the things we must do is look at the criminal justice system and its different components.

You heard in passing reference in the typical derogatory

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manner, again expected, about a recent event and an historic event that took place under the leadership of the Prime Minister, the current Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago where a CARICOM symposium was had right here in Port of Spain. A symposium under the banner of CARICOM at the invitation of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago on violent crime as a public health issue, and I take great umbrage in one of the submissions that was made by the previous speaker, the Member for Oropouche East, where again unfortunately—and I look forward to the day when this would not happen—there was a naked attempt to mislead the population through the Parliament, where the Member for Oropouche East said that absolutely no statement or declaration was made linking public health to crime coming out of the two-day symposium. And you see that is—I draw it to the public’s attention, put the spotlight on it, that is the typical playbook of trying to rewrite facts, to rewrite truth and to rewrite history by those on the opposite side.

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

**Hon. S. Young:** So for the population sake and to ensure that this august House is not misled and that the *Hansard* reflects what is true and accurate, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I use a little bit of my time, unfortunately, in having to correct that and referring the

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population to the declaration by the Heads of CARICOM who participated earlier in April, only a few weeks ago, in this symposium and the declaration that came out of that which was a strongly worded declaration. I was fortunate enough, along with the Member for Arouca/Maloney, the Attorney General, the Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs to accompany our Head, our Prime Minister, in the meeting with the other Heads of the CARICOM as they painstakingly early in morning of the last day went through what is the declaration that should come out of this crime symposium and I witnessed first-hand the pain that every single Head of CARICOM who was present was personally going through as they related the difficulties in that room and publicly that they are having similar difficulties in their fight against crime and criminality in their country but I will come to that. I want to just correct the record.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of April, the CARICOM Heads of Government had a declaration and a statement that started:

“We the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, (CARICOM) meeting in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on April 17-18, 2023, on the occasion of the Regional Symposium to address Crime and Violence as a public health issue”

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And they start by saying:

“Alarmed by the epidemic of crime and violence in the Caribbean, fuelled by illegal guns and organized criminal gangs, as a threat to our democracy and the stability of our societies;”

That is recognition of the seriousness of what we are facing, not only in Trinidad and Tobago but throughout the whole CARICOM region.

“Cognizant of its cost to our social, economic and health systems;

Determined to ensure that our people of the Caribbean can exist in an environment of peace and safety;

Seized of the urgent need to reverse the normalization of violence in social interaction and to restore the bonds of social solidarity;

Convinced that the multi-faceted nature of violent crime and its pervasive effects require a robust regional response that includes a public health approach...”

And I need not go any further. Just up to that paragraph, it proves to the population, once again, how brazen and boldfaced, unfortunately for us as citizens, those on the other side are that they will come in this Parliament when there is a public record in writing of what took

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place as a very important symposium, a historical symposium, an attempt in full view of the population to mislead them. And population of Trinidad and Tobago, take careful note—

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

**Hon. S. Young:**—because that is the UNC way, to attempt not only to distract by personalized attacks and personalizing everything.

**4.45 p.m.**

You heard it. That is all we witnessed for the last 45 minutes, nothing of substance, not surprising. But what is most upsetting about it is the consistent attempts to rewrite history and to mislead the population of Trinidad and Tobago and to paint my country in the worst possible light, which we are not. And I take personal umbrage to that here today, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

To go back to the reality and the facts of what we witnessed at that crime symposium, a regional symposium, we had the Heads of Governments of Jamaica, Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, the Bahamas and others, Grenada. Every one of them spoke about crime and criminality in the same manner that we did.

One of the things that struck me during that two-day symposium is listening to the Commissioners of Police from the

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Bahamas and from Jamaica, give their presentations to the region. And yet still, we come here today on this Motion in a frivolous manner by some, thinking it is a joke, what it is that has to be dealt with out there. But I want the population of Trinidad and Tobago to know, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this is something. It is a scourge that is taking place throughout the region and we on this side, they can rest assured, are not afraid to confront it and to deal with the issues of crime and criminality, and we will do so scientifically and we will do so by resourcing and assisting those who are constitutionally charged with the responsibility to secure our safety in Trinidad and Tobago; the Trinidad and Tobago Police service, the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, our prison service, our intelligence services, Immigration, Customs.

There is not a country in the world that authorities do not ask for more resources. So, let us not fool ourselves and the population knows that. You merely need to turn on your television now and look at an American international news channel and see that they are coming to the brink of not being able to pass a budget, because of the wrangling taking place in their House of Parliament, their equivalent; and to understand when you listen that it is because all of the bodies want more resources.

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So, if it is anything that I would like the population to understand from my contribution today, is that we on this side are conscientious. We on this side are concerned. We on this side will support the Minister of National Security as he carries out his job. And in a whole of government approach, he will get that support.

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

**Hon. S. Young:** To sit here today and to listen to the juvenile commentary that: “Oh, nobody will support and nobody will come to the defence and cheese stands alone” saddens me because it shows that there is a lack of maturity. It shows that there is a lack of understanding and a lack of real effort to carry Trinidad and Tobago forward unfortunately, by some.

As I was saying, at the regional crime symposium, it was the first step; that is acknowledgment of the problem and understanding that throughout the region we are facing violent crime, and it is a public health issue. And coming out of that, that was stated clearly by every practitioner, one of the great difficulties that we face here in Trinidad and Tobago, and the rest of the region unfortunately, is the influx of illegal arms and ammunition. And what we are facing right now is the reality.

And, again in a frivolous manner, making jokes about assault

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weapons, and trying to mislead the population after the Heads of CARICOM said that they were going to ban assault weapons, you had some—I was going to use bad language, and I reminded myself where I am—people trying to mislead us the citizens by referring to the Firearms Act and saying, “But look, it is already banned, automatic weapons”. Yes, in the definition of prohibited weapons in the Firearms Act, automatic weapons are banned. But I put on the record here today that it is assault weapons. And the definition of assault weapons will come. And we know what assault weapons are. And in particular, the devastation of the calibre of weapons being used out there on our streets today by the criminals. So do not try to tangle this up that it is about illegal arms and we are going after legal firearms. That is not true, population. It is the illegal firearms and we are saying that one of the ways to stop the scourge of assault weapons is also to say we do not even want the legal ones. And the definition will come, and it will cover what it needs to cover. It is not currently covered.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is important to appreciate that the violent crimes we are experiencing today, especially with illegal firearms and increasingly with these assault weapons, commonly known as the AR 15s, the AK 47s, 5562 and 762 ammunition, as a

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phenomenon of the region and not only in Trinidad and Tobago.

It is very difficult, as someone with responsibility to govern this country, to face the types of police reports that the Minister of National Security would face, and to see that what has become consistent in the past few years now—and this is the reality we face. When you get a report on a crime scene now, you see 30 spent shells of 556; 20 spent shells of 762. One of those rounds of ammunition will kill whoever it hits immediately, unlike 9 millimeters ammunition and .38. And that is why we call them weapons of war, because of the type of destruction.

I was speaking to my colleague, who is the MP for D'Abadie/O'Meara, recently, about something that took place in her constituency. And I want the population to know we the Government are aware. And that is why we are all putting our shoulder to the wheel to assist and to fight in this thing of crime, where criminals using these heavy assault weapons were shooting to kill somebody at a parlour, say, 50meters away from a house, and a woman inside of the house, who was in the safety and comfort of her bedroom, a 556 bullet passed through the wall, passed through her steel door and unfortunately snuffed her life as she was walking out of her bedroom. So, to come here today and to listen to those on the other side

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scandalize individuals, attack the police service.

I took great umbrage to hear the previous speaker making fun of the police service, on what must be stop and search exercises taking place where they are there with their torchlights searching vehicles and making fun of them and talking about his friend's purchase of two vehicles that would pick up illegal firearms in a vehicle. Well, I want to tell them and tell the population that even with the use of those X-ray vehicles, the police still have to go with their torchlights into the motor vehicle and identify where the illegal firearm is.

So, to again come and try to mislead the population that there is some vehicle that would just X-ray a passing vehicle and it will, what? By magnet, or by miracle pull out the illegal firearm? No. Yes, it would make it easier to identify. But the police officer still needs to use his or her torchlight to find it in the vehicle, once they have identified there is something suspicious. So, do not come here as usual in a flippant manner to try to mislead the population.

But I get back to my main submissions. How do we deal with the crime and criminality? It is all about the criminal justice system. And very briefly, that talks about separation of powers. What does separation of powers mean? There is a Legislature, which is this; the elected Members of Parliament and the Senate, who pass law. That is

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one part of it. The second part is the Judiciary, who interpret law and make decisions. The third part is the Executive, that is the Government that runs the country. And those three arms have very different responsibilities but are all necessary to fight crime.

I heard the Member of Parliament for Oropouche East say, “But look, we supported plenty legislation, some of which we did not have to support”. Allow me to interpret that for the population. Strategically, decisions were taken with certain legislation that does not require a special majority, where they know that the Government will pass it anyway and that the people are meant to benefit from that legislation. On a few choice occasions, if you go and look at the record, the parliamentary record, and see how many debates we have had on legislation related to the fight against crime since 2015 to now, it is a lot more than those few, that handful that you heard that certain support was given for.

But I want to remind the population, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of two critical pieces of legislation that I heard the Member of Parliament for Oropouche East say that the Opposition supported, that required special majority. The first, and I could not believe the audacity to claim support for this piece of legislation, was what we know as the FATF legislation, the tax information exchange Act with

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the United States. I remember when that had to be passed, because what it would have done is crashed and collapsed the whole banking system in Trinidad. We as a new Government in 2015 to 2016 had to pass that legislation. It required a special majority. What it means is that the Board of Inland Revenue and the Central Bank would provide certain information upon request to the United States Treasury Department for citizens of the United States and those who are required to file tax in the United States.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those pieces of legislation, they did not support. They did not support it, and what it meant—I will say what you did and you can go to the record and it will reflect exactly what I say. Because every time I stand up and say something, it is because I know I have evidence to support it. And let that be a message for beyond this Parliament as well.

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

**Hon. S. Young:** On the first occasion it came, it would have meant if it was not passed there would have been a collapse of our correspondent banking. I remember they did not support it, and then that happened. And the Americans said, “Well, your system is going to collapse”. And the population rose up, and the population said this needs to be supported, because it meant sending money for your child

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at university, receiving money from a relative in the United States that you need here in remittance, could not happen. And it was the population that forced them.

I remember walking with the then Attorney General, the Member for San Fernando West, the Member for Arouca/Maloney and myself to meet with the Opposition because the population had put the pressure. So go and check the records. On the first occasion it came to Parliament, they did not, because they have a way with certain legislation that requires a special majority, of terrorizing the population, driving them to the brink. They did the same thing with the bail legislation and the anti-gang legislation. The record would reflect, that when it was a PNM Opposition, the PNM Opposition supported it. Because we recognize, even in Opposition, how important the safety and security of our population is.

Do you get reciprocity when it is the UNC in opposition? The answer is no. So, do not come in the Parliament now and claim at the end of the day you supported it, after you terrorized the population and you had to have the police service and the population demand that they support it. We have to come out, if I remember correctly, in our vacation period. And the first thing you had to do is to amend the passage of time, because if you fail with a Bill, you have six months

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before you could bring it back. And the parties had to agree that we would pass the legislation in that condensed period of time.

I put these on the record to reflect the reality of what we are dealing with, because unless we all get together in the fight against crime—and it is not old talk and people trying to be popular and relevant saying, “Look, I willing to talk with you all”. That is not what we are interested in. The population is smart and the population is intelligent and they know who is really interested in taking Trinidad and Tobago forward.

So we come back now to this separation of powers and the criminal justice system, and these are the components of a criminal justice system that has to work in order for us to successfully combat crime in this country.

**5.00 p.m.**

Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, our forensics, the Director of Public Prosecutions and his office, defence attorneys and the Judiciary. In that make-up, the Legislature’s role is to pass good law and to pass law that would assist in the fight of crime. That is the policy position, and that is what our responsibility as Parliamentarians is, as well as an important component called accountability.

So, again, I ask the population to look, because you must look

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to your Members of Parliament and see what they are doing and then you will decide, in the not too distant future, who you are going to ask to continue to govern Trinidad and Tobago. So you look at the accountability part and you look at the Joint Select Committees and ask yourself—especially in the Joint Select Committee on National Security, look at the behaviour of the members of that Committee and see what it is that goes on, because that is where accountability is supposed to come in.

So you have a Chairman, the Member for Port of Spain South chairing that Committee, and they call persons before them. The other day it was the Commissioner of Police and two of our most senior officers. I want the population to look at the behaviour of people in that Committee. And is it that they are utilizing that Committee for proper accountability for the people of Trinidad and Tobago, or is it that they are trying to undermine what is going on out there? I just asked the question and the population will judge in the not too distant future.

Another important pillar that we identified very early was you need to have a permanent Commissioner of Police. Because the population would remember—

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

**Hon. S. Young:**—a former Attorney General on the other side said, “Nah, keep dem on a 10 days wuk because dat means yuh cud get dem tuh do what yuh want.” So, in other words, if you have a temporary Commissioner of Police, he or she is indebted to you and always worried about whether they will be renewed.

Again, the population can look and see what happened from 2015 under this Government. The first thing we did was amend the Order to make it simpler to appoint a permanent Commissioner of Police. The first thing they did in response to that, meaning the Opposition, is rush to court, challenge it, and try to stop it from happening. But all the judge did is remove one part where previously it said that the Minister of National Security commences the process by asking the Police Service Commission to do its job. And that is not interference, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that was because a government wants to get things going. As soon as the court cleared it up, the process began. We had a merit list. We went through the first person.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Member, your initial speaking time has elapsed. You have an additional 15. Care to avail?

**Hon. S. Young:** I would like to use the 15, please, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Proceed.

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

**Hon. S. Young:** Because, you see, sometimes it is important to remind the population—and unlike what the previous speaker tried to do by saying we will go to 2010, I have no intention of doing that. The population knows what went on between '10 and '15. This is what we did and how we approached it and they will judge us on it. Immediately, we got the process going. The Police Service Commission, they produced a merit list. First person on the list was a Mr. Dulalchan, then a Harold Phillips and a Stephen Williams, not necessarily in that order. The Government took decisions not to support and then the Government supported the appointment of a permanent Commissioner of Police. And that took place with a three-year term and tenure. And the hon. Prime Minister has spoken to that and that decision.

But what I will say is, again, the population should recall what happened on that day when the Government used its majority to appoint the first permanent Commissioner of Police in many years, no support from the Opposition even though it was one of their former Ministers of National Security and their colleague. But again, the population will judge and will see that there is a government, a PNM Government, of which I am proud to be a part, that took the decision

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that we needed a permanent Commissioner of Police and we will take the risk and do what needs to be done for the country. The rest is history.

What has happened since then, once again, we have come and we have appointed another permanent Commissioner of Police, and for the first time we have a female Commissioner of Police.

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

**Hon. S. Young:** And these are the steps that a responsible government takes in a fight against crime because, as I said, that is the first part of the criminal justice system, the police service. It is not for me to stand up here today and to say how much resources, how many hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money have been provided to the police service.

The next part is forensics. Again, we started off today's serious debate with persons laughing at an important milestone at the Forensic Science Centre, and mocking the current Minister of National Security because he went to a ceremony of handover for a container that is not a 40-foot simple shipping container, which is what they want the population to believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a container that we, as a Cabinet, looked at over a number of weeks to satisfy ourselves at the behest of the Minister of National Security, that it was

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going to improve the Forensic Science Centre. And we decided, yes, and we supported him. This container is to contain evidence—

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

**Hon. S. Young:** —for the proper containment of forensic evidence. And you would have heard the amount of work and effort that has gone in to what is taking place in forensics, and how much quicker the pace is now of turning around evidence, exhibits, testing, casings, et cetera.

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

**Hon. S. Young:** So, well done—well done to national security for that and the police service.

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

**Hon. S. Young:** So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the point is that despite how they want to sell it, the population can look and they can see—and yes, we are facing difficulty times, crime and criminality. No one denies that, no one on this side says anything different to that. And we will support and continue in our fight against crime, and it is a regional effort now.

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

**Hon. S. Young:** I have heard this repeated on several occasions, that the Opposition was only invited for the opening session of the crime

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symposium. That is a semantic and a play on words.

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Because immediately at the coffee break—the coffee break did not mean it is the end of the opening symposium, Madam Speaker—there was a mass exodus and departure, but it was not over, and no one asked anyone to leave. And immediately thereafter there was a public announcement reminding that all Members of Parliament have been invited for the two days.

So, again, do not try to mislead the population and pin something to this Government that is not true. It was a strategic decision taken to show a face and to rush outside to the cameras to then say what was said. And that is fine, that is the politics of the Opposition. They are entitled to that. But do not try to water down the seriousness and the benefits of what the regional heads of CARICOM did and what came out of that.

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

**Hon. S. Young:** Because, you see, the type of politics we are seeing, Madam Speaker, is nothing but destructive of Trinidad and Tobago. And I could say without fear of contradiction that the Members of Parliament on this side, the PNM-elected Members of Parliament, the PNM-elected Members of Government, could face all of the citizens

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of Trinidad and Tobago between those two flags that are on either side of the Speaker's chair and continue to pledge allegiance to Trinidad and Tobago.

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

**Hon. S. Young:** And what I am asking the population, through you, to do, Madam Speaker, is look at the behaviour of a party when it is in Opposition. Do they support the type of legislation that needs to be passed in the Houses of Parliament that would better Trinidad and Tobago? And quite frankly, the record is not there for the UNC, but it is there for the PNM.

So no matter what happens and who comes to stand up in a booth of Parliament and bawls and screams and makes veiled threats, and to be silly, and to have innuendos and, in the most vile ways, personalized attacks on other Members, the population will decide who is it that is better to govern Trinidad and Tobago—

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

**Hon. S. Young:** —as they have in 2015 and 2020. And when it comes to this issue of crime and criminality, I also heard, again, in such a juvenile and immature manner the screaming of, “Oh, police and security going down to a part of Trinidad for people to frolic, et cetera.” I take umbrage to that because I could say under this

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administration, since 2015, security is provided on a threat assessment basis. And there is no Minister here who has a personal vehicle with blue lights, parading up and down from Hyatt to UDeCOTT to HDC, down to Penal, down to—no, it does not exist.

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

**Hon. S. Young:** And if there is high officeholder in this country who is afforded security service by the country and they go to wherever it is they go and that security follows them, that is on the basis of proper policing. It is nobody in Government giving no instruction for joyrides and for status symbol, and the country could rest assured that is how this Government operates.

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

**Hon. S. Young:** But I want remind the country very briefly during that period, that we had to outfit security for a house in Penal, a private house, and a helicopter pad and all that kind of thing. That “doh” happen under this Government.

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

**Hon. S. Young:** There was also a very personalized attack on the Member for Laventille West, and a speaking about an Integrity Commission Order and a suggestion to the population that something was amiss and wrong. I want to assure the population, that was a

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normal process and procedure, where under the legislation of integrity in public life, you have to file forms, declarations. Sometimes you are busy and you miss your date, as I have done in the past, and if you do not rectify it, they can go for a ex parte order, so you do not even know they have gone to court, meaning the Integrity Commission. But I tell the population, that as soon as the Member was served with the Order, he did what needed to be done and he rectified it. Because that is who he is.

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

**Hon. S. Young:** He “eh” duck and hide from court and make any “bacchanal” about it.

The last thing I want to end by saying—because, again, it is misinformation that is being put out there to the population, is there was reference to a case. And, again, they just cannot help themselves, the Member for Oropouche East called it a “Court of Appeal case.” The High Court—and I understand he has never practiced law even though he may have a law degree. The High Court is a lower court than the Court of Appeal. The High Court, where Justice Devindra Rampersad is a judge, gave a decision this week, the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, where the claimant is a Mr. Brent Thomas. And all I am addressing is, there is a suggestion that he was abducted and brought back to

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Trinidad on a TTDF plane. It is not a TTDF, it would be the Trinidad and Tobago Air Guard plane. The fact is that did not happen and it was an RSS plane, the regional security services out of Barbados, and I say no more because the court will deal with that at the appropriate level. But do not come now to try and tarnish the police service of Trinidad and the defence force of Trinidad. I as a citizen, a citizen first and foremost, take great umbrage to anyone who attacks those who are try to do right in Trinidad and Tobago. So I put that on the record.

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

**Hon. S. Young:** The last thing I will end by saying just to correct the record, Madam Speaker, is the Member made a statement. He said, the Member of Parliament for Laventille West was asked in question time today: Have you contacted our international partners to find out who committed this cybercrime act, meaning the bomb scares this morning, to, again, try to mislead the population. Our cybercrime unit in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and our intelligence services have the capability to do what needs to be done electronically to trace what needs to be traced. And you “doh” pick up a phone and call anybody, international partner, and say, “Aye, tell meh what dah IP address came from or where this bounce from.”

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For evidential purposes that will have to be done via a MLAT. And if that needs to be done, I can give the assurance to this population, it will be done.

Madam Speaker, may I ask how much time I have left?

**5.15 p.m.**

**Madam Speaker:** You have just about three minutes left.

**Hon. S. Young:** Thank you very much, it allows me to address two more things. There is also a narrative being painted here today that because—and we have condemned it in the highest ways—what happened this morning with the bomb scare that the National Security Council was bypassed, or the National Security Council had no role to play. It slipped the Member for Parliament for Laventille West because we spoke about it as he sat down and he has asked me to correct the record. The National Security Council was alerted to these threats that were taking place this morning, almost simultaneously after it happened. The National Security Council then exchanged communications amongst each other. In addition to that you had the Chairman of the National Security Council speak directly to the Minister of National Security.

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So, when you hear a suggestion by the other side that the Member for Siparia would have called an emergency meeting. We act a lot more efficiently than that—

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

**Hon. S. Young:** —because you see, to call such a meeting may have meant a helicopter ride. We do not need any helicopter ride. We immediately convene in the mode that we have to discuss and pass information between ourselves and I tell the population that was done first thing this morning.

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

**Hon. S. Young:** So, Madam Speaker, as my time has run out, I want to assure the population of Trinidad and Tobago that this Government is very cognizant and concerned about not only what happened this morning which we condemned in the highest possible terms, but about the level and scourge of crime and criminality throughout the region that we unfortunately in Trinidad and Tobago too, are faced with. And I give the assurance that we will continue to do what we need to do to the best of our ability, to provide for the safety and security of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Naparima.

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

**Mr. Rodney Charles** (*Naparima*): Madam Speaker, as I begin I wish to congratulate the mover of this Motion, the Member for Barataria/San Juan for bringing a timely, relevant and important—

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** —Motion to this House. And it speaks, Madam Speaker.

*Whereas* the Minister of National Security is responsible for ensuring public safety, by the maintenance of law and order, and the effective oversight of national security infrastructure.

And whereas—and I have to remind the previous speaker because he did—in my view he strayed from the Motion.

*And whereas* the Minister of National Security through his vast and continued incompetence, has mismanaged the organs and departments of national security.

*And whereas* the Minister of National Security has unequivocally demonstrated his inability to competently execute his duties.

*Be it resolved* that this House express its lack of confidence in the Minister of National Security.

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Madam Speaker, it is not—first let me congratulate the mover of the Motion and the Member for Oropouche East, who spoke eloquently to the areas of incompetence and ineptitude and nonperformance of the Minister of National Security. Madam Speaker, it is not often that I feel sorry for the Member for the Port of Spain North/St. West. I actually felt sorry for him today because he was put up—he came to speak and the whole tone of his presentation was damage control, Madam Speaker—

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** —the Member showed by his subdued tone of his contribution that he understands why Minister Fitzgerald Ethelbert Hinds is unfit to be Minister of National Security.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** So, he did everything else but give us justifications from a performance standpoint of this Minister's performance and competence, nothing about this competence. We heard about his regional conference on crime as a public health emergency, rather than identifying the deliverables to justify the continuation of Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds as Minister of National Security. I would have hoped that I would have heard, you know, statistical evidence of improve recidivism rates under this Minister. I heard nothing, Madam

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Speaker. I would have hoped to hear about improved crime detection rates. And when we speak about crime detection rates, we talk about the improvement 20/30 per cent and it actually it is in the crime plan by the Commission of Police. But we have no time frame in order so, we do not know about a crime detection improvement over a six month period or a one year period.

I would have thought, Madam Speaker, that the Member for Port of Spain/North St. Ann's West, would have come up with data with respect to police response times. Madam Speaker, I lived in the United States when I was an Ambassador and if there was a—sometimes an alarm would go off and in two minutes there would be three police cars, we would want to call them and say it is a mistake, and by the time we call them to tell them is a mistake there are two cars in front wanting to find out what the problem was. I would have hoped we would have heard about this. I thought we would have heard about equipment for fire stations—

**Mr. Tancoo:** Yes.

**Mr. R. Charles:** —when will they be adequately resourced. I would have hoped we would have heard about scanners and Madam Speaker, a birdie whispered to me this morning, a person who works at Plipdeco and they told me that there are two scanners and none

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operational at this time as you speak, Madam Speaker. I thought we would have heard about that, but we have heard nothing.

So, when you juxtapose the presentation by Minister Hinds, with his colleague who sits next to him the Minister of National Security was loud, garrulous, but unproductive.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** It was Rasta talk, it was I, I, I, I man, I qualify, I do this, I went to school, I pass meh exam—well all of us in this room passed our exams, all of us—

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** —you juxtaposed that with Minister Stuart Young who was attempting to be—he attempted to be in terms calm, in terms of reflective, and even though he was calm and reflective he was unconvincing, and inadequate—he providing inadequate support for his colleagues.

So, Madam Speaker, we did not want to hear about a 1.5 million talk shop called a regional symposium on crime as a public health issue—

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** —we are not here to defend whether it is a public health emergency or not. That is not the purpose of why we are here

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today. We are here to discuss the lack of performance, ineptitude, incompetence and the pervasiveness of crime under this Minister of—this failed Minister of National Security.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** Madam Speaker, the Minister who spoke before me from Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, Madam Speaker, he came with innuendos as to what—how we delivered ad hominem attacks on when we—all our speakers gave clear, definitive information that identify the variables in which there were nonperformance by the Minister of National Security but Madam Speaker, this is not new.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** I refer to an editorial the *Express* editorial, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023, I think that is two days ago, and they have identified what we have got today. And I quote:

“Minister Stuart Young’s penchant for innuendo and conspiracy theories is becoming quite tiresome.”

Madam Speaker, we heard it today. The latest example came yesterday in his response to media questions and they quoted as saying:

“...absolutely no natural gas crisis...”

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Minister Young proceeded to insinuate that there was mischief afoot in the reporting adding.

This is continued narrative that I have seen trying to be sold by particular individuals some of whom are being paid by those in the industry to do it. Well, it was the same thing we heard today that we on this side, we have some conspiracy theory and we—all that we are you doing on this side is helping you to understand that you are misgoverning Trinidad and Tobago at this time. And we are pointing out areas in which you can improve. Minister Young, came with—you know, trite—

I give the assurance that the Minister of National Security is a good boy, he puts his best foot forward.

We are not questioning his commitment. We are questioning his ability and his performance.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** He has failed, he is failing and he is unlikely to provide comfort and security to a nation that is grappling with insecurity. Our citizens are unable to sleep at night peacefully, Madam Speaker. If the dog barks twice we get up and we survey. Madam Speaker, you get up in the night and you check downstairs,

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you make sure that everything is okay. We are living in fear and this Minister of National Security just does not care.

Madam Speaker, for the records we condemn the act of terror against our children, our teachers and parents and we hope that this Government will take the necessary action to bring the perpetrators of that act, or those acts today to the justice. But we asked, we asked why is this happening at this time under the watch of this failed Minister of National Security? We have to ask what are the proactive actions taking place to ensure that these things do not occur.

Madam Speaker, I think I must clarify for the record and for Hansard, a statement by the Minister of Energy that we—with respect to FATCA Bill, that we supported it only after there was a hue and cry from the population. Madam Speaker, we supported it because we made amendments that improved the Bill, and our Leader has always told us that we will support good legislation. So, we supported the FATCA Bill, but Madam Speaker, the Minister of Energy also misled the House by giving the false impression that when we were in government, the People's Partnership Government, between 2010 and 2015 the PNM Opposition supported our Bills, Madam Speaker, that is a total misrepresentation of the facts and we will not allow the

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Minister of Energy to rewrite history in a way that serves the interests of the People's National Movement.

I will give examples, Madam Speaker, these are crime fighting Bills voted against, by the PNM between 2010 and 2015. And I challenge the Minister of Energy to tell me that this is not true. They did not support the Constitution Amendment Capital Offences Bill of 2011. They did not support that. They did not support the Miscellaneous Provisions Remand Bill, 2010 and devoted against it in the House but they supported it in the Senate.

**5.30 p.m.**

Madam Speaker, the PNM of 2010 to 2015 did not support the administration of justice Bill, 2011. They voted against it in the House, but supported it in the Senate. That is the DNA Bill. The fourth Bill they did not support—and these are crime Bills—The Administration of Justice (Electronic Monitoring) Bill, 2011. They voted against it in the House and supported it in the Senate. So to come here and cry like Pontius Pilate, we are—I wash my hands of it, because “we are Saints and the UNC are sinners”. There is nothing—that is far from the truth, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** The PNM between 2010 and 2015, did not support

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the Bail (Amdt.) Bill, 2013. They did not support the Miscellaneous Provisions (Defence and Police Complaints) Bill, 2013. They did not support the Miscellaneous Provisions (Administration of Justice) Bill, 2014. They did not. And, therefore—in fact, Madam Speaker, we have supported more PNM Bills than they supported when we were in government.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** We are better than them. Our performance record could stand scrutiny. Madam Speaker, we want to know, we would have expected to hear today from the contributions from the other side, explanations of: Why we are the sixth most criminal nation in the world, Madam Speaker? We would like to know: Why are we in company with Venezuela with 83 murders per 100,000 citizens; Papua New Guinea with 80.7 murders; South Africa; Afghanistan that just came out of a war, Madam Speaker; and Honduras, where gangs have taken over that country and people are moving to the borders of the United States as refugees to escape the criminality? Trinidad and Tobago ought not to be in company with those countries. We are in company with Syria? Syria just fought a war. They are still fighting a war between the Kurds, the Syrians—and well other countries involved are Russia, Turkey—to protect their interest in that area.

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This is the war zone we are living in, in terms of data on criminality.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** And would they come and make a joke about why we bring this Bill to ad hominemly attack the Minister of National Security? We are concerned for the citizens of our country and their safety and security.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** It pains our hearts to know that citizens are fleeing Trinidad and Tobago to the United States and Canada, et cetera. In my own situation, we have friends, very close friends, nurses, cannot wait—and, at some stage, the Minister of Health will have to give us the true figures about the nurses who are migrating from Trinidad and Tobago, because of the fear of criminality and crime under the watch of this Minister of National Security.

I would have hoped we would have heard about providing equipment, because part of the Motion talks about:

*“And whereas the Minister of National Security through his vast and continued incompetence has mismanaged the organs and departments of national security”*

It speaks to the fact that the organs under his Ministry are under-resourced, significantly under-resourced. Madam Speaker, let us look

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at the fire service.

Under Item 156, Head 156 of the Development Programme Estimates—Purchase of Vehicles and Equipment for the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service. You know what immediately stands out, Madam Speaker? No actual expenditure in 2015; none in 2016; and none in 2017. That is shameful. Shameful. None in 2018; none in 2019; not a single black cent in 2020; and not a penny in 2021, and this Minister has the confidence of his Prime Minister to remain as Minister of National Security. That is, Madam Speaker, a shame, a burning shame on Trinidad and Tobago, our country.

Madam Speaker, the organs under the watch of this Minister are all in state of what Lloyd Best would call “a state of pre-collapse”. I refer, Madam Speaker, to 02 July, 2020 *Newsday* article “Prison officers call for removal of Hinds”—Minister Hinds—“over failed promises”. This is not the UNC talking. I quote from the article:

“Prison officers in the rank and file of the service are demanding the removal of National Security Minister Fitzgerald Hinds over his failed promises to provide adequate resources and improve their security.”

Madam Speaker, the Prison Association knows that he is a failure. We have brought a Motion indicating that he is a failure and, Madam

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Speaker, we call today for his removal as the Minister of National Security.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** The association president, he is no longer the president, but then:

“...the association’s president Ceron Richards said Hinds ‘has consistently proven his inability to deliver on promises made as it relates to prison officers overall safety and the maintenance of acceptable working conditions.’”

They are on the ground. They know what is happening, and they have indicated to Trinidad and Tobago, that Minister Hinds is a failure. He should be immediately removed from the post, so that we can have someone qualified and competent to deal with our national security.

Madam Speaker, *CNC3*, November 2<sup>nd</sup>: “Fire Officers want PM to intervene, say they lack critical equipment”. Last night, on *CNC3*, fire officers, Leo Ramkissoon, the President of the Fire Association said fire officers in Tobago are using their own vehicles to respond to fires in Tobago. Madam Speaker, this is 2023. We are spending millions of dollars and fire officers have to use their own vehicles to respond. And, Madam Speaker, it is a joke when fire officers go and see hoses leaking. Sometimes no water, sometimes no

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appliances, no appliances, and this Minister sits and is defended by his colleagues who, one day will have to answer. They will have to answer for the unconscionable support they give to the egregious nonsense that the Minister of National Security does and excuses for performance in Trinidad and Tobago.

“Budget documents show that the T&T Fire Service was allocated \$61 million in fiscal 2022, with \$40.8 million for much-needed upgrades to existing fire stations, construction of new stations and procurement of vehicles and equipment.”

And this is Leo Ramkissoon, the President of the Second Division Fire Officers. He says:

“I can’t answer for the Ministry of National Security about that”—money. “I telling everyone we don’t have the equipment.”

Lord have mercy. We have fire stations that are there for decorations. We have officers being employed on three shifts and no equipment, wasting money on salaries when there can be no deliverables, no performance and people dying, as my colleagues says. And Mr. Ramkissoon is saying:

“How I going to explain about \$40 million? I don’t know what they do with that, ’...”

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Madam Speaker, that is problematic, that is shameful, Madam Speaker. That is disgraceful, in terms of performance.

I want, Madam Speaker, it is not only with respect to fire equipment, it is also with respect to the police service also. It is also—where are the dashboards for the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service—the dash cameras and the body cameras for officers? We are in problems, Madam Speaker, significant problems.

Madam Speaker, it is not only the fire service, but the prison service. The prison service is in shambles with former president of the association Richards stating and I quote that the prison service is in need for:

“...the repair of an alarm system at the Maximum Security Prison...”—and there is a constant—“...failure to provide ‘basic necessities to effectively carry out our mandate.’

Among the issues he highlighted are the dilapidated dormitories, no money to assist officers who need surgeries, dental and eye care. He said while the prison has an abundance of qualified drivers, a private security firm has been contracted to transport prisoners.”

That is *Newsday*, July 02, 2022.

Madam Speaker, it is not only the fire service and the prison

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service, but also the Life Guard Unit.

“Patrol Captain at the Maracas Bay Lifeguard Unit Karl Hernandez said...no such attention had been paid to ensuring the nation’s beaches were...patrolled.”—adequately.

This is 2023. We are aspiring to be a First World nation. We want to compete with Singapore, we want to compete with South Korea and Japan. We are a nation surrounded by beaches, and the persons who are up front and personal are telling us that when we go to the beaches, 90 per cent of the time, we are on our own if a riptide catches us. That is disgraceful, that is shameful, that is non-performance, and we call for the removal of the Minister of National Security.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** The patrol captain goes on to admit:

“...the current crop of lifeguards were overworked...as there were only 11 lifeguards rostered.”

Lord have mercy. As they say in some churches:

“Lord help us. Lord graciously help us”.

We cannot depend on this Minister of National Security.

Madam Speaker immigration officers:

“Twenty-five employees at the Immigration Detention Centre...in Aripo say they have not been paid salaries for

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January.”

That is *Guardian* February, 19, 2023:

“...that 20 out of a total of 70 immigration center officers, as well as five emergency management programme and cleaning staff on short-term contracts have not been paid their salaries for last month.”

And that was the month of January. Where are we going? Why are we making excuses for incompetence?

The Prime Minister, in response to a question in Parliament this week, said he has confidence in his Cabinet and in the Minister of National Security. How could he in the light of this performance? If this were the private sector, if this were Shell, if this were Texaco, if this was Amazon and if this was any international company worth its salt, the entire bunch of those Cabinet Ministers would have been fired, pronto, based on performance.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** Pronto, based on performance. But, Madam Speaker, Minister Hinds, it is not that we are under-crediting a peer as Minister of National Security today. It is that the Prime Minister must have had experience of his performance and his utterances.

**5.45 p.m.**

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Madam Speaker, when we examine the utterances of the Minister of National Security, before he became Minister and after, while he is Minister, it does not inspire confidence, Madam Speaker. There is something that is worrisome when one looks at the language, and people—we learn about oratory in terms of leadership. We learn about Churchill in those days when England stood alone, when he said, “We will fight on the beaches. We will fight on the land. We will never surrender,” and he inspired a nation to stand up and fight the might of the German army and the Luftwaffe aircrafts. Does the Minister of National Security, by his utterances, match the eloquence needed to inspire us to feel that he can solve the problems?

Hear his language, Madam Speaker, and I am quoting here to bring the example that he lacks the competence, the capability to lead us. These are examples of the language used by this Minister of National Security which do not inspire confidence or respect. On a PNM platform at Mafeking Junction, Mayaro, some years ago, Minister Hinds said—and we do not forget these things:

“...as a younger parliamentarian then, I said the UNC is badly wounded. We need to finish them out. Kill them dead. I want you to understand that on November 28, you have the opportunity to drive...”—

**Madam Speaker:** Member, just withdraw that word and use another word. Okay?

**Mr. R. Charles:** I am quoting, eh. Sorry.

**Madam Speaker:** Yeah.

**Mr. R. Charles:** Quote—all right.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, even quoting is your own words, eh.

**Mr. R. Charles:** Okay.

“...you have the opportunity to drive a PNM balisier deep...”—in—“...the hearts of the wicked UNC vampires.”

And I am quoting, this is his exact words:

“Take a stake with a balisier on top and drive it deep within their heart and finish them off once and for all.”

**Madam Speaker:** What I am saying, even though I know it is some sort of figurative language, I think, you know, in the climate—

**Mr. R. Charles:** All right.

**Madam Speaker:**—and what you are speaking about, let us—

**Mr. R. Charles:** I get it.

**Madam Speaker:** Yes.

**Mr. R. Charles:** Thank you. It even hurts us; it hurts me to read this. Right? This is a person—

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

**Mr. R. Charles:**—who my grandchildren have to look up to and follow.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member, so your original time is now spent, you have 15 more minutes to—

**Mr. R. Charles:** Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Right. Sure.

**Mr. R. Charles:** At a public meeting at Piggott’s Corner, Belmont, 2015, Minister Hinds referred to the UNC as:

“...alligators from the same murky lagoon.”

While they were in Opposition, after Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, toured flood-ravished areas, Mr. Hinds, as Senator, said, and I quote, and it is in *Hansard* on November 22, 2011—it is in *Hansard*, I quote:

“...I saw an idiot little rasta boy kissing the Prime Minister’s palm. It made me sick. And if I...”—made—“...my way I would cut every dreadlock off him head! Every one! Madam Vice-President, an idiot boy; yes, a rude little dreadlock.”

That is the language of a man that does not inspire confidence and leadership in Trinidad and Tobago—

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

**Mr. R. Charles:**—and we must stop making excuses for mediocrity

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and poor performance, Madam Speaker.

We are witnessing unprecedented levels, not only language and whatnot, we are witnessing unprecedented levels of increasingly gruesome crimes since he was appointed Minister. This is a fact. The Minister has already answered the question. He is on record as stating that his job is not to ensure our security and safety. So every day—this is Trinidad and Tobago in 2023. Madam Speaker, I am 74 years old. When I was in the 60s, in high school, in Naparima College, in Sixth Form, we looked forward to Trinidad and Tobago being a utopia. Instead, it is a dystopia, if they know the meaning of the word. We looked forward to Trinidad and Tobago as a place we could bring up our children and grandchildren. You know, Madam Speaker, I am a patriot but when my children talk about where they should migrate, should they not migrate, I keep quiet. The patriotism in me tells me to tell them, “Stay here,” but the performance of the Ministry of National Security and the Cabinet tells me to, “Run—

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

**Mr. R. Charles:**—as far as you could go.” And it hurts me because I had that choice when I was in Canada and graduated, and I could call—Sen. Eugene Forsey, he told me, “Remain in Canada, Charles. Remain in Canada.” I said, “No”. I wanted to come back. I was on

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scholarship too, so I wanted to come back and I really wanted to come. I am a patriot. So we call on you, perform for heaven's sake.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** Do not take our paradise and turn it into a Haitian quagmire. Madam Speaker, this is what you read about, execution-style killings, bodies dumped along the highway, people in police uniform lining up three citizens and shooting them, “bow, bow, bow”. Jesus—sorry. Sorry. Sorry. I “cyah” take it anymore. You all are a disgrace.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** How do you sleep at night? How do you justify to God on that day your performance record and the high salaries that you have got? Madam Speaker, how? How? I would be ashamed.

Children left dying, right, left and centre; school, churches, temples and mosques broken into; primary school pupils, one less than 12 years of age being suspended from school because he is a gang leader. A 12-year-old is a gang leader? I get vex. I get vex. But this is my country and I have to stay here and I have to fight to make it better even though the insults, the hurt and the nonsense I have to put up with, it hurts me in my heart. Madam Speaker, seven years in Government and the PNM has absolutely nothing to show. I do not

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understand how those on that side can in good conscience sit and by their silence defend the indefensible. Madam Speaker, we are the sixth most criminal country in the world. The Trinidad and Tobago Air Guard has been gutted. Our prison system is struggling. In the past month, we have two widely reported incidents where houses were burnt because the fire service was under-resourced in one case; tragically, life lost in others.

The Forensic Science Centre is in a perpetual state of being overburdened, unaccredited, understaffed and ignored. Ammunition from the National Security arms are turning up at crime scenes apparently used by criminals. Regiment, TTR bullets, and they sit on that side, collect their fat salaries, walk with security behind them and do not have a conscience to deal with our problems.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** Almost 1,200 murders while this Minister is Minister and you are defending that, the Minister of Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West? Shame on you.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** You cannot see what I am seeing, what all of Trinidad is seeing. There is a newspaper article where they talk about a crime plan, and hear what people say—Margaret Kinsale:

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It is the preparation on paper or preparation that goes into action to get the required results.

Right? What somebody said:

It is eight years they did not—that is the crime plan, sad. The word is just “grand charge”. Failure before it start. The law and justice—

—it goes on and on, citizens are fed up.

Madam Speaker, we read yesterday, “Judge stays...charges against firearms dealer”, and to read this is to worry about where we are going as a nation:

If you oppose—

—and this is former Prime Minister Patrick Manning:

If you oppose, my dear friends, they get angry; they get annoyed.

But that is what Patrick Manning said:

If you oppose this Government, you have to be careful because they will hound you down.

And, Madam Speaker, this reads frightening, “eh”. I will just read a part. The judge also questioned how the officers could be allowed to continue serving in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service without some sort of investigation being launched into their conduct. Their

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actions were so damaging that the judge said it resulted in the

“...complete and utter stripping away...’ of Thomas’s  
‘dignity...reputation’, and that of his business...”—and his  
business was—“...Specialist Shooter’s Training Centre...”

It says:

“One gets the impression from the one-pointed focus  
that...”—Assistant Superintendent—“...Birch had on these  
claimants that he was determined to find something which  
could incriminate the claimants notwithstanding the  
documentary evidence before him.”

Madam Speaker, you know the fear I have? But then I am 74, so I  
have worked it out, all I fear is death. All that could happen to me is  
death, but scripture tells me:

“...death, where is thy sting?...grave, where is thy victory?”

Since I do not fear death, I do not fear them. I do not fear them.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** Nevertheless, I check my water tanks to make sure  
there is nothing, a white plastic bag with cocaine planted in it.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** I check because I am scared in this country. We are  
heading for Tonton Macoutes territory where the TTPS is being used

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as an agent, if we go by what is written here, and it is subject, Madam Speaker, to the contents of the judges and findings in the court case, as published in the daily *Express*, Friday 28 April, 2023.

I am worried. We are in KGB territory, when if you go against Putin, he plucks you from England, United States and he deals with you. And what we had yesterday was shades of “Putinesque” behavior; they pluck you from Barbados, whether is it RSS plane or Trinidad aircraft, pluck you from Barbados, bring you back to Trinidad, humiliate you. Madam Speaker, I was campaign manager of the United National Congress in 2020—2019/2020.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** We won the election but it was PASU office; it was raided by the TTPS. They were looking for voter padding and, Madam Speaker, you got the sense that things could be planted on you. Nobody was convicted but yet—and when I looked on the papers, Rodney Charles and Ms. Seepersad, another picture as if we were criminals.

My priest came to me and said, “Archie”—that is how they know me—“you could tell me anything, you really do wrong?” And I had to explain. I was teaching in COSTAATT, the students were not paying attention and they turned and said, “Mr. Charles, we are

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willing to put up money to fight your case.” Madam Speaker, it was embarrassing. They want to embarrass you if you oppose them, Madam Speaker, and I am worried for my lovely Trinidad and Tobago.

And, Madam Speaker, we have a list of so many things that we could help this Government. We want to help. We have offered ideas. The political leader, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, said, “Prime Minister, we are willing to talk to you.” Oh Lord, take the advice. Gary Griffith said the same. If you are failing and you realize you do not have the competence and people are offering assistance, even if you believe they have nothing to offer, at least sit and listen. Scripture says:

“...let us reason together...”

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** But we have an incompetent group who feel they know everything—who feel they know everything. And whether it is the gamut of performance, whether it is the economy, whether it is the education system, whether it is the fire service, whether it is the prison service, everything is collapsing under their watch.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** We have ideas, Madam Speaker, we have ideas. If

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only they would humble themselves, understand that this is God's country, not their country, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** This is not PNM country. We have offered ideas, like separating the Ministry of National Security into home affairs and defence. The Prime Minister said I got it from America, I got it from Singapore. Madam Speaker, it is clear that the gamut of organs and divisions in the National Security arm and also in the defence arm are too much for this incompetent Minister.

**6.00 p.m.**

Madam Speaker, we have talked about upgrading the qualifications for police officers. Today in the NYPD, to get in you must have credits at degree level and college credits to get in. Why, with all the number of unemployed graduates we have, we cannot infuse into the TTPS qualified people in forensics, people who have capabilities in report writing, who have capabilities in presenting cases in court, in getting evidence. We have passed the stage where five O'Levels is enough to feel with the transnational criminality that faces Trinidad and Tobago.

We have talked about introducing five minimum security detention security detention centres based in south, central, north and

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east Trinidad. We have spoken about increased rehabilitation facilities and treatment to be offered for persons with drugs and mental illnesses. What is wrong with this? Why can we not talk? You may disagree with 60 per cent of what we do, but accept 40, for God's sake, in the interest of our children. "You only care 'bout yuhself?" You only care about your big car that you park outside? Your only care about your fat salary? You only care about your children—your children who will be safe, like my children will be safe?

### 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. Madam Speaker, I would like to remind this House that on Friday 5<sup>th</sup>, we will have Standing Finance Committee.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Members, there is one matter that qualifies to be raised on the Motion for the Adjournment of this House. I now call upon the Member for Chaguanas West.

### **Caroni River Bank Deterioration (Threat of Flooding)**

**Mr. Dinesh Rambally (Chaguanas West):** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for recognizing me. Of course, Madam Speaker, I am duty bound, and hence the reason why I have sought to raise this matter on the Motion for the Adjournment of the House, namely the threat of flooding posed to people living in the areas of Caroni Village, La Paille Gardens, La Paille Village, and La Paille Settlement, owing to the rapidly deteriorating Caroni River bank abounding these areas.

Before I get into the few minutes that I have, I would like to point out that in relation to these areas that have been listed in the Motion, that when we say Caroni Village there are two particular areas, and they are well-known areas, which have compromised areas to the river bank, and that is in Caroni Village. I am referring particularly now to New Street Extension and the old Caroni River bank in the vicinity of Gandhi Street. La Paille Gardens is another area. La Paille Village, Tullock Street Extension is another area, and I have mentioned La Paille Settlement. Coincidentally, La Paille Settlement, when I left Parliament on Wednesday, I had to go straight to this vicinity because it is a compromised area, and due to the rainfall and the Caroni River itself being in spates, of course it started to flow into the development in an area that we call “Ruby Street”.

I want to say at the outset that raising this Motion has no

political undertone in it, and I want to make that quite clear. I want to place on the record that on occasions when we have potential threats these areas, or we actually have the flooding, if I reach out to the Minister of Works and Transport, four out of five times he would answer my calls, and so I will get hold of him.

**Hon. Members:** [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:** I would like to say, for the record, that If I reach out to the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, Member for San Fernando West, I may get him three out of five times, but I will get him.

**Hon. Members:** [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

**Mr. D. Rambally:** So I want to place that on the record that I do get the audience of these Ministers. But what we are referring to today, and as I get into it I want to go back to—

**Madam Speaker:** Members, I am so happy that you all are congratulating each other. I now wish to hear the Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. D. Rambally:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I get into it now, into some details, I refer to a letter, and the contents of a particular letter, 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2020, because this will set the tone of what I am aiming at. This was a letter which was sent to:

“The Honourable Mr. Rohan Sinanan...  
Minister of Works and Transport”

And the caption of that letter at that time:

“Flooding in the constituency of Chaguanas West and  
Environs”

Madam Speaker, what I essentially said was that:

“As you are aware, parts of the country grappled...”—of course,  
this is September 2020—“parts of the country grappled with an  
exceptional bout of flooding on Saturday 19th September  
2020.”

I will show how this continues over successive dry and rainy seasons.

“This has delivered another painful reminder that we need to  
quickly find new ways to confront the increasingly difficult task  
of flood preparation. At this time, water runoff from the land  
far exceeds the capacity of the various channels.

1. Flooding is not a partisan issue. It affects all of Trinidad  
and Tobago. Based on the many grievances voiced by  
constituents of Chaguanas West, I have given them the  
assurance that I will reach out to the relevant authorities  
to see how best this issue of flooding can be tackled. As  
a result, I now write to you as Minister of Works and

Transport, to bring to your attention, the specific problems of the Chaguanas West...and to invite the Minister to treat with the dilapidated, non-functional, and even non-existent drainage systems and other flood-related issues impacting the area.”

Madam Speaker, I went into some of the effects related to me as Member of Parliament for Chaguanas West, from constituents:

“Persons whose homes have been affected, have suffered great loss, and for those who recently lost their jobs or are economically challenged,...”—Of course this was during the pandemic, September 2020—“theirs is a double hit. There have been reports of school books and shoes being soaked with muddy water, and stoves and fridges being partly submerged resulting in the family’s inability to cook and store food safely. Waterlogged mattresses mean that some families are displaced and will have to find alternative sleeping accommodation until these are replaced. Electronic appliances, cookware, clothing, carpets and mats have been damaged or destroyed. In the coming days, the constituents will deal with the removal of the silt from flood water which caused damage to all the furniture on the ground floor of homes, as well as to the walls,

woodwork, and other parts of the house itself. The stench of wet furniture, mould and mildew will linger for a while. Whilst the walls will have to be washed and flood-marks scrubbed away, the emotional trauma of this experience will persist for some time.

3. The inability to immediately restore the surroundings to proper levels of sanitation raises concerns of disease occurrence, such as leptospirosis and other kinds of infection...
4. The psychological impact on persons repeatedly affected by flooding can be seen as a mental health issue, and it has not yet been addressed in any meaningful way by the relevant Ministry and/or other agencies.”

So, Madam Speaker, I went into some further details. But what I have essentially brought this Motion for is that this was September 2020, following a bad bout of flooding, and then what happened you also had flooding taking place in August of 2021, in these particular areas.

In August 2021, the New Street Extension area—the Minister, again I point out when I had reached out to him on that particular occasion, we managed—the village had an all-night vigil whereby trucks came and delivered material, and we were able—with that

proactive step during the night we were able to stop the flooding, and works continued during the next day, whereby we were able to compact the river bank. So it shows that when we are proactive, we are able to mitigate the full extent of the flooding.

Madam Speaker, another occasion where we would have had flooding would have been in November 2021. So August was at one point, which was New Street Extension. In November of 2021, there was another part, which was Tullock Street Extension in La Paille now.

Then I move on, Madam Speaker. There were protests at that point in time. On 7<sup>th</sup> April, 2022, there were other protests, and these were placard protests, where people had raised their concerns from the vicinity. Madam Speaker, on 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2022—so you can see that going into the rainy season, and sometimes during the rainy season, for the past three years—11<sup>th</sup> August, 2022, we would have had flooding at the old Caroni River bank, and this was in the Gandhi Street area.

So what we have been seeing, and I am not a meteorologist, but I can say that what I have observed over the past few years, is that we are seeing the change in the weather patterns, yes. We are seeing that the rainy season starts earlier in the year. Last year 2022, was in early

May. This year we have seen it—towards the end of April we are seeing a change in the weather pattern already.

Madam Speaker, I repeat, there is no flood politics here, we can prevent this. On behalf of the constituents of Chaguanas West, I call upon the hon. Minister of Works and Transport to give the clearest of assurances, and I humbly demand that the necessary works that have to be carried out in these areas be effected before the end of May 2023.

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

**Mr. D. Rambally:** These are areas which, yes, if there is increased rainfall, if these banks and these areas, the banks are embanked properly, it will mitigate the extent of flooding which these areas experience time and again. Madam Speaker, on Wednesday when I left Parliament I met with the residents when the water was entering their development. They said did not want—not that they were not thankful for assistance in the past, but they said Member of Parliament—of course they would say, “MP, we do not want bottled water this time. We do not want hand out of food. We just want to be in the safety and comfort of our homes”.

Madam Speaker, there was in one particular area—the hon. Minister is aware of this—this is La Paille Gardens, where the

residents did a petition. In that petition—I want to place it on the record, that the residents themselves when they did the petition, they actually thanked the hon. Minister for the works that was done on a previous occasion in La Paille Gardens. But, again, when those works are done at the point in time, it is not followed up and, therefore, the infrastructure is not concretized and, therefore, it still remains in a dilapidated state, in a weakened state. So over 200 residents had signed that petition where they were calling on the Minister to take works, and to get the necessary work done before this rainy season starts.

So I humbly demand of the hon. Minister that we have works taken on, and that it be implemented and completed satisfactorily, that these residents of these different areas do not have to be on flood watch and flood fear indefinitely as we go into rainy season.

Madam Speaker, I thank you very much.

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

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the Motion before us, which seeks to address the threat of flooding posed to people living in the area of Caroni Village, La Paille Gardens, La Paille Village, La Paille Settlement,

owing to the rapidly deteriorating Caroni River bank bordering this area.

You may have noticed that there has been a considerable change in the weather in recent years. The truth is, we have been experiencing more intense rainfall in a shorter period of time, which has considerably pressured our existing drainage channels. Warmer ocean temperatures and the challenges of rising sea levels have collectively contributed to more dynamic weather events. In many cases, these dynamic events have led to flooding. Treating with the issue of flooding requires a collaboration and a collaborative approach, in which the Ministry has its role to play, which I will elaborate on through our ongoing projects and its initiatives.

The wider public also has a critical role to play. There is need for a more cultural and behavioural shift in the way we do things, such as the manner in which we dispose of our waste, construct our homes, where we construct our homes, and the way we interact with the environment, all of which contributes to flooding.

Madam Speaker, the Caroni River collects water from water courses and tributaries bounded by the Central and Northern Range, namely Cumuto, Aripo, Arima, Guayabal, Carapo, Oropune, Tacarigua, Tunapuna, St. Joseph, Malick, San Juan and the Mausica

River.

**6.15 p.m.**

In recent years, planned and unplanned development as well as upgrades have been undertaken. Also, Madam Speaker, the impact of abnormal and severe rainfall in recent times have all resulted in high peak flows, increasing the volume of water entering the Caroni River. This has resulted in erosion, scoring and over-topping of the embankment. This ultimately leads to the failure of the embankment causing areas in the vicinity of the Caroni River to become more prone to flooding. The Drainage Division has constantly monitored, and had inspections along the Caroni River to determine the work that needs to be executed based on a level of priority.

Madam Speaker, time does not permit me to go into all the work the Ministry of Works and Transport has embarked upon in this financial year, however, just to give the Member the assurance that he has asked for, I will just focus on the areas that he spoke about. In Caroni village, construction of a retaining wall, the proposed work at location one along the south bank of the Caroni River, New Street, Caroni entails the construction of a re-enforced concrete wall on auger piles supplied and installed, installation of a new flood-control structure, automatic drainage flap gates. The slope protection work

construction consisting of gabion baskets, the procurement process is currently ongoing. The La Paille Gardens, temporary embankment strengthening works were executed immediately after the threat was identified by the residents.

Madam Speaker, I want to give the Member the assurance, including the La Paille Settlement Village where temporary embankment strengthening work was executed to the south bank of the Caroni River and the north bank of the Caroni River, at this location reshaping and widening in May 2022, the Drainage Central Division continues to monitor the embankment work since extreme rainfall events were experienced. Madam Speaker, all areas that the Member spoke about are being addressed by the Ministry, and again, time does not permit me to go into all the other projects taking place on the Caroni. Since 2019 we have done over 40 projects on the Caroni River, including desilting, embankment, shaping and widening of the Caroni River. In this financial year another eight projects, excluding the gates and upgrades of pumps are taking place in that area. But, Madam Speaker, I can speak about the 500 desilting projects going on around Trinidad. I can speak about the upgrade of the Pumps and Gates Programme. I can speak about the river walling and all those programmes that we have ongoing.

But with our very ambitious programme, flooding is a phenomena that is taking place around the world, and I want to urge my colleagues, let us stop—and I was happy to hear the Member say this is not apolitical Motion. We need to stop politicizing flooding. We have to work together. We have to start to educate our people, because if we continue to go down this road about every time there is a flood the Minister did not clean the river and the Minister did not clean the drain. When they had flooding two weeks ago in Miami I was getting requests and jokes that probably the Minister did not clean the drains in Miami and the rivers in Miami.

Flooding is taking place around the world, and I want to urge all the colleagues in this House, let us go on an educational programme, let us try to advise people where we are building, how we are building. Just two nights ago I had the Member calling me at 11 o'clock in the night to send pumps into Caroni Settlement because there was some incursion on the river bank a couple of years ago where a structure was about to be built, erosion of the river bank and the project was then abandoned. With the type of weather we are getting now, what we saw there was the effects of that.

Right now, as we are clearing rivers and desilting, as we clear the banks, desilt the river, people are going to plant on the bank.

When they do that they weaken the bank. When the flood comes it will affect us all. I think what we need to do as a country, we have to understand the threat that is facing us. We are an island. We have challenges with coastal erosion, and we also have the challenge of floods. The Ministry will do its part. This year the Ministry has the most aggressive Flood Mitigation Programme in the last seven years. But we need the assistance of—all hands must be on deck. It is not just about when you get flooded and you get “flood out” you go and say, “well, the Government did not give me the last year grant so ah waiting for the grant”, and we are making noise for grants.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry will continue to do its part. I give the Member the assurance that the three areas that he spoke about are being addressed in our programme this year. Just like how today you have work actually going on, on one of the sites there. What I want to urge all your colleagues on the other side, to think and operate like you. Let us work together, you and your tag-team partner Member for Couva South who will call me two o'clock in the morning.

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

**Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan:** Two o'clock in the morning for a pump.

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

**Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan:** I want your colleagues to understand that if we work together we will get a lot more done. Madam Speaker, I thank you for being able to make this contribution.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 6.21 p.m.*