HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 08, 2023

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[Madam Speaker in the Chair]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the hon. Stephen Mc Clashie MP, Member for La Brea, and Dr. Lackram Bodoe MP, Member for Fyzabad, who have requested leave of absence from today's sitting of the House. The leave which the Members seek is granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation (Vesting) (Amendment to the First Schedule) (No. 2) Order, 2023. [The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis)]

2. Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation (Vesting) (Amendment to the First Schedule) (No. 3) Order, 2023. [Hon. C. Robinson-Regis]

3. Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation (Vesting) (Amendment to the First Schedule) (No. 4) Order, 2023. [Hon. C. Robinson-Regis]


5. Revenue Authority (Extension of Period) Order, 2023. [The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert)]

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6. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 2018. [Hon. C. Imbert]

7. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 2019. [Hon. C. Imbert]

8. Second Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Non-Receipt of Financial Statements of the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended December 31, 2008. [Hon. C. Imbert]


10. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Mayaro Civic Centre for the year ended September 30, 2016. [Hon. C. Imbert]


12. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Point Fortin Civic Centre for the year ended September 30, 2008. [Hon. C. Imbert]

13. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Point Fortin Civic Centre for the year ended September 30, 2009. [Hon. C. Imbert]

15. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the National Library and Information System Authority for the year ended September 30, 2016. [Hon. C. Imbert]


19. Report of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago with respect to the Progress of the Proposals to Restructure CLICO, BAT and CIB for the quarter ended March 31, 2021. [Hon. C. Imbert]

20. Annual Report and Audited Financial Statement of Accounts of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ended September 30, 2022. [Hon. C. Imbert]

Papers 6 to 20 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

22. Audited Financial Statements of Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited for the year ended December 31, 2022. [Hon. C. Imbert]

23. Audited Financial Statements of National Information and Communication Technology Company Limited (iGovTT) for the financial year ended September 30, 2022. [Hon. C. Imbert]


25. Consolidated Audited Financial Statements of Point Lisas Industrial Port Development Corporation Limited for the financial year ended December 31, 2022. [Hon. C. Imbert]


*Papers 21 to 26 to be referred to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee.*


33. Annual Report of the Children’s Authority of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended September 30, 2021. [The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Ayanna Webster-Roy)]


40. Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development to the Eighth Report of the Joint Select Committee on Local Authorities, Service Commissions and Statutory Authorities (including the THA) on a Follow-Up Examination into the Recommendations contained in the First

41. Ministerial Response of the Ministry of Health to the Twelfth Report of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee on an Examination into the Accessibility and Availability of Diagnostic Imaging Services at Public Health Institutions in Trinidad with Specific Reference to Regional Health Authorities under the Purview of the Ministry of Health. [Hon. C. Robinson-Regis]

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE REPORTS

(Presentation)

Local Authorities, Service Commissions and Statutory Authorities (including the THA)

Strengthening Initiatives of the Service Commissions Department

Ms. Khadijah Ameen (St. Augustine): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present:


Shipping Bill, 2020

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Marvin Gonzales): Thank you very much Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present:


Representation of the People (Amdt.) (No.2) Bill

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The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present:

Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to consider and report on the Representation of the People Amendment (No.2) Bill, Third Session (2022/2023), Twelfth Parliament.

URGENT QUESTIONS

Birth Certificates at Regional Locations (Resumption of)

Mr. David Lee (Point-a-Pierre): Thank you Madam Speaker, to the Attorney General. Given the recent reports of citizens being unable to obtain copies of their Birth Certificates, causing significant hindrances to hundreds from undertaking key activities, will the Attorney General state whether this service has fully resumed at all regional locations throughout Trinidad and Tobago?

Madam Speaker: Attorney General.

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Reginald Armour SC): Thank you very much Madam Speaker. In answer to the question I first of all advise the hon. Member in this House that consistent with this Government’s commitment to keep the public informed of developments, the Attorney General's office issued the following public advisory on the 1st of September. The Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs wishes to advise of the full restoration of service in the issuance of birth certificates at our Registrar General’s department. Processes are being finalized to have the service resumed fully on Tuesday, 05 September, 2023 at Arima, Port of Spain and San Fernando Registrar General’s Office. And I am able to advise this House today that all services have been fully restored.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]
Madam Speaker: Member for Point-a-Pierre.

Mr. D. Lee: Thank you Madam Speaker, to the Attorney General as a follow-up: Given that this is a very critical department area, what was the cause of the disruption?

Madam Speaker: Attorney General.

Sen. The Hon. Reginald Armour SC: Thank you Madam Speaker. T, The cause of the disruption was varied, more than one, and included among others, Madam Speaker, disruptions in the collection and dissemination of the polymer paper, which is a special grade paper that has to be used for purposes of the printing of birth certificates, as well as difficulties which are being experienced at the Ministry related to the cyber-attack.

Madam Speaker: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Could the hon. Attorney General tell us what steps are being taken to ensure that such an unfortunate situation does not reoccur?

Madam Speaker: Attorney General.

Sen. The Hon. R. Armour SC: Every effort is made to ensure that full services continue to be delivered to the citizens of this country in this and other areas. Thank you.

1.45 p.m.

_MV Cabo Star_
_(Inter-island Transportation)_

Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh (Couva South): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. To the Minister of Works and Transport: Given that it has been more than two weeks that the Cabo Star has been non-functional on the domestic sea bridge, will the Minister inform this House when this vessel will return to the sea bridge to continue inter-island transportation of goods and services?

Madam Speaker: Minister of Works and Transport.
The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan):

Thank you. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the MV Cabo Star vessel sailed at 11.23 p.m. from Scarborough on Wednesday 23 August, 2023. A fire incident occurred on the vessel following its departure from the Port of Scarborough, Tobago. The fire originated in the engine room, which was later isolated, and extinguished by crew members. No injury was reported on board. The Cabo Star has been out of service for 13 commercial sailing days. Since the incident, coverage on the inter-island sea bridge continued to be provided by the HSE Buccoo Reef, the HSE APT James, and the MV Galleons Passage.

Capacity utilized on the APT James was 2,800 private cars and 1,699 commercial vehicles; on the Buccoo Reef, 2,724 cars, 1,674 commercial vehicles and on the Galleons Passage, 296 cars, 451 commercial vehicles. At this time, repairs to the electric cables of the vessels are currently ongoing. The cables were not readily available locally, but have arrived. It is expected that the vessel will return to commercial operations on the 17th of September. This is subject to the final certification by class, which is out of the control of the Port Authority and the Ministry of Works and Transport. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Seeing that the question focused on the Cabo Star, Madam Speaker, could the Minister inform this House how much it will cost the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago, taking into consideration the Port Authority, what the Government has procured, the Venezuelan cargo vessel, the MV Emprendedora?

Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the cost to the people of Tobago will be a cost that we regret, which is the inconvenience that the vessel would have caused. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has not procured any additional vessel. A vessel was provided by the
contracted agent of the *Cabo Star* and there is no cost, extra cost, incurred by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. But we apologize for the inconvenience that the accident caused to the people of both Tobago and Trinidad. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Speaker, to end the starvation of goods and services in Tobago, could the Minister inform this House, how much it will cost to repair the *Cabo Star*?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister.

**Sen. The Hon. R. Sinanan:** Madam Speaker, again, I know some Members on the Opposition would like to use that word “starvation” in Tobago, however, I read on the newspaper that the Secretary—one of the Secretaries from Tobago that indicated that there is no food shortage in Tobago, and also another Secretary who indicated that there are no challenges with building material in Tobago. However, the Member should know that the *Cabo Star* is a vessel that is a rented vessel in Trinidad and Tobago, and any cost to the repair is borne by the owners of the vessel or the agent to whom the vessel was chartered from. Unfortunately, I do not think the Member could get the answer that he is looking for. Thank you.

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

**Gasparillo Secondary School**

**(Status Update on Urgent Repairs)**

**Ms. Anita Haynes (Tabaquite):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the Minister of Education: Given the collapsing infrastructure at the Gasparillo Secondary School, will the Minister provide a status update on the urgent repairs required?

**Madam Speaker:** Minister of Education.

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

**The Minister of Education (Hon. Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the infrastructure at Gasparillo Secondary has shown no
sign of being structurally compromised and is therefore not collapsing. Classes are actively ongoing at the school at this time. However, the school is 39 years old, and as any other building that age which houses 742 students, it requires extensive repair. Some items have been deemed critical; some have been scheduled to be completed over the course of the academic year. Work on some of the items, which were deemed critical, began during the July/August 2023 vacation period, and these were roof and ceiling replacements in block B and covered walkways. These works were completed and AC units are currently being replaced and/or serviced at the school.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER in the Chair]

The next phase of works scheduled, which was agreed upon when the Ministry officials visited the school with the staff on September 07, 2023, includes electrical work to block B and E, and the admin block; burglarproofing repair to blocks B and E; other repairs to block B including railings, stairwells, windows, partitions, box drains, masonry repair and repainting. As for all other schools, the Ministry of Education continues to work with the NMTS on continuous school repair in an effort to ensure that disruption to school operations is kept at a minimum. Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Supplemental, Member for Tabaquite.

Ms. Haynes: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Madam Minister, I came from the school today—

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Ms. Haynes:—with the PTA this morning. The works that you have cited as having been—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: [Inaudible]—you need to just—
Ms. Haynes: Yes. Yes. Yes. The work that you cited as having been completed with the ceiling is—in fact they have not been completed. So do you have a sign-off—

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Ms. Haynes:—from the contractor that those works are completed because I have photographs from today of incomplete ceilings in the Gasparillo Secondary School, as at today?

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: And your question is?

Ms. Haynes: If there is a sign-off from a contractor that the Minister is reporting to this House that that work can be in fact reported as completed, when I saw it for myself that it was not. So I am asking for the accountability.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Minister of Education.

Hon. Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly: Thank you kindly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as indicated, the works, the ceiling and roof works are in block B and the covered walkways and doors have been completed as certified by our facilities department, as well as the NMTS. So I am not sure where the Member took the pictures, however, as I indicated, there is other work to be done at the school and that has been scheduled. The most critical works were completed and the work continues at Gasparillo Secondary.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Final supplemental, Member.

Ms. Haynes: Minister, can you give us a timeline of the repair for the completion of works at the Gasparillo Secondary? So we want to know when can we say to the parents that the work will be completed.
Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Minister of Education.

Hon. Members: [Crosstalk]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Please.

Hon. Dr. N. Gadsby-Dolly: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I indicated, these works are ongoing and continuous. Even as you plan to do a particular scope of work in one area, as the Member may have seen, when you remove ceiling, and you are thinking you are doing a simple repair, sometimes it is more extensive than that, and therefore to give a date would not be, at this time, the right thing to do. We are continuing the work.

What I can tell you is, today, work has been completed, work is ongoing, as has been scheduled. The Ministry officials have visited the school. They have spoken to the staff and the most critical items have been identified and that is ongoing now and will continue until the school is up to par.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Commission of Enquiry into Paria Tragedy
(Legal Action against Chairman)

Mr. David Lee (Pointe-a-Pierre): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Question No. 4 to the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries: Based on the recent media reports, will the Minister confirm whether Paria Fuel Trading Company Limited and Heritage Petroleum Company Limited have taken any form of legal action against the Chairman or any member of the commission of enquiry into the Paria tragedy for alleged bias?

Madam Speaker: Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.

The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the outset, let me place on the record that the

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Government has not managed, in any form or fashion, how Heritage and Paria are approaching the commission of enquiry. Having said that, in response to getting an answer for this question, the answer is, no. No legal action has been taken by either Heritage or Paria with respect to either of the commissioners, or the commissioners as both with respect to the commission of enquiry. What has happened is a letter has been written, saying that there are allegations of bias and asking the commissioner for a response, but that is not legal action.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Leader of the House.

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are four questions for oral response, we will be answering all four. There are five questions for written response and we are answering four. We are asking for a deferral of question 147.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission
(Details of)

162. Mr. Barry Padarath (Princes Town) asked the hon. Minister of Public Utilities:

Will the Minister provide a detailed breakdown of the following:

a) the amount owed by each State entity to the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC);

b) the total debt repaid to T&TEC, by each State entity to date; and

c) the measures that will be implemented by the authorities to avoid any future accumulation of debt to T&TEC by State entities?

Prime Minister’s Trip to Barbados
(Details of)

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186. **Dr. Roodal Moonilal** *(Oropouche East)* asked the hon. Prime Minister:

Will the Prime Minister state:

a) the names of all officials including staff and security who accompanied the Prime Minister on his recent trip to Barbados during the period May 5 to 8, 2023;

b) the cost of the overseas travel inclusive of hotel accommodation, meals, ground transport for the Prime Minister and any other officials listed at (a); and

c) any other related costs incurred by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago?

**Prime Minister’s Trip to Washington DC, United States (Details of)**

187. **Dr. Roodal Moonilal** *(Oropouche East)* asked the hon. Prime Minister:

Will the Prime Minister state:

a) the names of the Ministers, all officials including staff and security who accompanied the Prime Minister on his recent trip or participated in meeting, functions and events along with the Prime Minister to Washington DC, United States of America during the period May 11 to 17, 2023;

b) the cost of the overseas travel inclusive of hotel accommodation, meals, ground transport for the Prime Minister and any other officials listed at (a); and c) any other related costs incurred by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago?

**Road Works in Barrackpore (Commencement of)**

188. **Mr. Rodney Charles** *(Member for Naparima)* to the Minister of Works and Transport:

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2023.09.08

Will the Minister inform the House when remedial works will commence at Rees Road and any other roads in Barrackpore?

Vide end of sitting for written answers.

WITHDRAWN QUESTION

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay. Hon, Members, by letter dated September 04, 2023, and in accordance with Standing Order 29(14), the Member for Fyzabad requested that the House of Representatives Question No. 185, listed on today’s Order Paper, be withdrawn.

The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Dr. Lackram Bodoе:

185. Dr. Lackram Bodoе (Fyzabad) asked the hon. Minister of Health:

Further to the response to the House of Representatives Question No. 58 on December 02, 2022, will the Minister state the number of COVID-19 patients being treated at:

a) the Couva Hospital and Multi-Training Facility; and

b) the Augustus Long Hospital?

Question, by leave, withdrawn.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory
(Status of)

184. Mr. David Lee (Pointe-a-Pierre) on behalf of Dr. Lackram Bodoе (Fyzabad) asked the hon. Minister of Health:

Further to the response provided to House of Representatives Question No. 9 on November 04, 2022, will the Minister provide an update on the status of

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the Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory at the San Fernando General Hospital?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

The Minister of Health (Hon. Terrence Deyalsingh): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The construction of the cardiac catheterization laboratory at the San Fernando General Hospital is being considered for implementation via an amendment to the memorandum of understanding between the Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology of the Republic of Austria and the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on industrial cooperation in the health sector. Thank you.

[Madam Speaker in the Chair]

NiQuan’s (GTL) Plant Accident (OSHA Details)

189. Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh (Couva South) asked the hon. Minister of Labour:

Further to the response provided to a Prime Minister’s Question on June 20, 2023 regarding the accident that occurred on the compound of NiQuan’s (GTL) plant on June 17, 2023, will the Minister inform this House whether the site of the accident has been preserved by the Occupational Safety and Health Agency (OSHA) in keeping with Section 47 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, Chap. 88:08?

Madam Speaker: Minister of Labour.

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Labour, the site at which this most unfortunate accident occurred on June 15, 2023, at NiQuan’s (GTL) plant, has in fact been preserved by the OSH
Agency. It is important to note that section 47 of the OSH Act, Chap. 88:08, imposes a duty on all persons to preserve the accident site by not tampering with anything at the scene in any way, except for in a few specified circumstances, unless permitted by an OSH inspector. Accordingly, a team from the OSH Agency, comprising the Chief Inspector, Senior Inspector, and Safety and Health Inspector I, visited the scene of the accident and sought to ensure that the accident site was preserved in keeping with the said section of the Act.

The team inspected the area, which had already been cordoned off. A prohibition notice was also subsequently issued by the OSH Agency to NiQuan on June 21, 2023, pursuant to section 74 of the OSH Act, prohibiting all associated activities on the reworks line (purging and steaming). Further, on July 14, 2023, the OSH Agency conducted an inspection of NiQuan’s facility to ensure that the accident site remained secured and preserved. It was observed that the prohibition notice remained affixed at the location and the area did not appear to have been disturbed.

Madam Speaker, I wish to assure this honourable House that the OSH Agency has taken all the required steps as provided for in the OSH Act in the face of this disturbing occurrence. Permit me, Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Government to express our sincere condolences once again to the family and friends of Mr. Allan Lane Ramkissoon. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

2.00 p.m.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Minister, given that you are answering on behalf of the Minister of Labour, could you state if the OSH recommendations and the root cause analysis coming out of this accident will be made public?

Madam Speaker: Member, really, that does not arise out of the question asked and the answer given so I rule that out of order. Do you have another question?
Oral Answers to Questions

Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Could the Minister inform this House if the OSH Agency has finalized a report into the said accident, given that NiQuan has resumed operations?

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Speaker, I am not in possession of that information given that I am speaking on behalf of the Minister.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** [Inaudible]

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Yes, I am not in possession—

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Couva South.

**NiQuan’s Plant Accident**

*(Independent Investigation of)*

190. **Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh (Couva South)** asked the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries:

In light of the recent tragic death of a worker at the NiQuan Plant on June 19, 2023, will the Minister indicate what actions are being taken by the Government to initiate an independent investigation into this fatal accident?

**The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Stuart Young):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, it should be noted, as we just heard, that it is the Occupational Safety and Health Authority and Agency (OSHA) which is the entity established in law with all of the necessary statutory powers and authority to investigate this most unfortunate, tragic, fatal accident. OSH issued a prohibition notice and is conducting an investigation.

Additionally, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries has set up a multidisciplinary team comprising of a petroleum engineer, chemical engineers, a mechanical engineer, and petroleum inspectors to conduct an independent investigation of this unfortunate, tragic incident at NiQuan’s GTL Plant which led
to this unfortunate fatality.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Minister, given the appointment of this independent committee, could you indicate to this House when the work of this committee is expected to be finalized and a report handed in?

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

**Hon. S. Young:** Madam Speaker, I am aware that the committee is doing its work and they are doing so very carefully. As to an exact and precise date, no, I cannot give that.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Minister, given the fact that the NiQuan Plant has resumed its operations and is functional, are you in possession or are you able to tell this House if you are in possession of any report that was finalized by the OSH Agency in relation to this accident?

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

**Hon. S. Young:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. First of all, I would like to correct something that I heard the Member for Couva South utter in his response to the Leader of the House a short while ago. As far as I am aware, NiQuan has not resumed operations, so therefore the rest of the question does not flow.

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**STANDING ORDER 79(3)**

**Continuation of Bills in the Fourth Session**

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 79(3) I beg to move that in the Fourth Session of the Twelfth Parliament, the proceedings of the following Bills be resumed:

5. The Representation of the People (Amdt.) (No. 2) Bill, 2020.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*Question put and agreed to.*

2.05 p.m.

**Madam Speaker:** The Attorney General.

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

**ECONOMIC SANCTIONS (IMPLEMENTATION OF UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2653 (2022) ON THE REPUBLIC OF HAITI) ORDER, 2023 (EXTENSION OF)**

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Reginald Armour SC): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

*Whereas* by section 4 of the Economic Sanctions Act, Chap. 81:05 (“the Act”) the President may for the purpose of implementing a decision, resolution or recommendation by a regional or an international organisation of States or association of States, of which Trinidad and Tobago is a member, that calls on its members to take economic measures against a foreign State make an Order with respect to—

(a) the restriction or prohibition of any of the activities referred to in section 5 in relation to a foreign State;

(b) the seizing, freezing or sequestration in the manner set out in the Order any property situated in Trinidad and Tobago that is held by or on behalf of—
(i) a foreign State;
(ii) any person in that foreign State; or
(iii) a national of that foreign State who does not ordinarily reside in Trinidad and Tobago.
(c) the exclusion of any person, property, goods, technical data, services, transactions, ships or aircraft or any class thereof from the application of the Order:

And whereas there is grave concern about the extremely high levels of gang violence and other criminal activities, including kidnappings, trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants, and homicides, and sexual and gender-based violence including rape and sexual slavery, as well as ongoing impunity for perpetrators, corruption and recruitment of children by gangs and the implications of Haiti’s situation for the region;

And whereas the illicit trafficking and diversion of arms and related materiel of all types contributes to undermining the rule of law and respect for human rights, and can impede the provision of humanitarian assistance and have wide ranging negative humanitarian and socioeconomic consequences;

And whereas the need to prohibit the transfer of small arms, light weapons and ammunition to non-state actors engaged in or supporting gang violence, criminal activities, or human rights abuses in Haiti, as well as to prevent their illicit trafficking and diversion;

And whereas the situation in Haiti continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security in the region;

And whereas the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is required, by virtue of
its international obligations to prevent and prohibit illicit financial flows, trafficking and diversion of arms and related materials of all types, illicit transfer, destabilizing accumulation and misuse of small arms and light weapons in all its aspects which pose threats to international peace and security, cause significant loss of life and contribute to instability and insecurity in the region;

And whereas the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is a member of the United Nations;

And whereas the United Nations Security Council has issued Resolution 2653(2022) requiring members of the United Nations to impose economic sanctions against entities and individuals listed pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2653(2022) concerning the Republic of Haiti;

And whereas by virtue of its membership to the United Nations, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is required to implement UNSCR 2653(2022), issued by the United Nations Security Council concerning the Republic of Haiti;

And whereas it is necessary to take measures to ensure compliance with our international obligations;

And whereas the President signed the Economic Sanctions (Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2653 (2022) on the Republic of Haiti) Order, 2023 on 6th June, 2023 and was published as Legal Notice No. 168 of 2023 on 12th June, 2023;

And whereas the President, in accordance with section 4(4) of the Economic
Sanctions Act, Chap. 81:05, did cause to be delivered on the 13th day of June, 2023 to the Speaker for presentation to the House of Representatives a statement setting out the specific grounds on which the decision to make the Order was based;

And whereas the Statement of Her Excellency the President, was debated in the House of Representatives on the 20th of June, 2023 and approved and published as Legal Notice No. 193 of 2023;

And whereas section 4(3) of the Act provides that subject to section 4(5), an Order made under section 4(1) shall, unless previously revoked, remain in force for three months;

And whereas section 4(5) of the Act provides that before the expiration of an Order made under section 4(3), the Order may be extended, either indefinitely or for a specified period, by a resolution supported by a simple majority vote of the House of Representatives;

And whereas UNSCR 2653(2022) remains in effect, and it is essential to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago’s obligations are encapsulated in law and compliance is maintained pursuant to the mandates therein and the requisite Sanctions Regime;

And whereas the continued implementation of UNSCR 2653(2022) is critical in furtherance of the restoration of peace, security, and stability for the Republic of Haiti;

And whereas it has become necessary to extend the life of the Order, until such time as it is revoked:

Be it resolved that the Order shall remain in force until such time as it is
Madam Speaker, this Motion is premised on the requirement for Trinidad and Tobago, as laid out in the body of the Motion, to continue the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 2653 as a member state of the United Nations and in alignment with our obligations in that regard. The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as a member of the United Nations is bound by specific international obligations as mandated by the United Nations Security Council Resolutions and in the particular case of our Caribbean, Haiti, this includes United Nations Security Council Resolution 2653 of 2022.

This House will recall, Madam Speaker, Article 2 of the United Nations Charter stipulates that:

“…in order to ensure…” — that — “the rights and benefits resulting from membership,” — are granted to each member State, all members — “…shall...in good faith” — fulfil — “the obligations assumed by them in accordance with the present Charter.”

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2653 mandates member States to ensure that all measures taken by them to implement this resolution comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law as applicable.

On the 21st of October, Madam Speaker, 2022, the United Nations Security Council Resolution adopted the very resolution 2653. And in this regard, for an initial period of one year from the date of adoption of that resolution, all member States are required to take the necessary measures in respect of individuals and entities designated by the committee to impose travel ban, asset freeze and targeted
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arms embargo.
The designation criteria are set out in paragraphs 15 and 16 of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2653 in respect of individuals and/or entities which are:

“Responsible for or complicit in, or…”—are engaging—“…in, directly or indirectly, actions that threaten the peace, security or stability of Haiti.”

And I do not need to set those out in detail. The particular designations are lettered (a) to (h) of paragraph 16 of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2653. As this House will recall, Madam Speaker, the Economic Sanctions Act, Chap. 81:05 is the legal basis of the Laws of Trinidad and Tobago upon which Trinidad and Tobago can implement resolutions made by an international organization of states of which Trinidad and Tobago is a member and which calls on its members to take economic measures against a foreign state.

As such, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has taken all appropriate steps to ensure compliance with our international obligations. In this vein, on the 6th of June, 2023, the statement of Her Excellency the President in accordance with section 4(4) of the Act, setting out the specific grounds on which the decision to make the Order was based, was signed. Thereafter, by section 4 of the Act, the Economic Sanctions (Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2653 (2022) on the Republic of Haiti) Order, 2023 was promulgated as Legal Notice No. 168 of June 12, 2023 so as to comply with the mandates of that Security Council Resolution.

Moreover, on the 20th of June, 2023, the statement of Her Excellency the President on the Economic Sanctions (Implementation of the United Nations Security

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Council Resolution 2653 (2022) on the Republic of Haiti) Order was debated in this very House pursuant to section 4(4) of the Act.

It is to be noted that by section 4(3):

“(3) Subject to subsection (5), an Order made under subsection (1) shall, unless previously revoked, remain in force for three months.”

As such, given that the Order was published on the 12th of June, 2023, the three-month period will expire on the 12th of September, 2023, in a matter of days. In this regard, section 4(5) of the Act provides that prior to the expiration of an Order thereunder made:

“…the Order may be extended, either”—one—“indefinitely or for a specified period, by a resolution supported by a simple majority of the House of Representatives.”

In light of the fact, Madam Speaker, that the United Nations Security Council Resolution remains in effect, it is therefore now necessary to extend the Haiti Order, 2023 to ensure Trinidad and Tobago’s obligations are encapsulated in law and compliance is maintained with its international obligations in relation to the mandates and in relation to its Caribbean neighbour, Haiti.

Taking into consideration, Madam Speaker, the international obligations and the legal framework which exist to implement same, the location of Haiti, coupled with the regional risks and context, we are here therefore today to bring this Motion before this honourable House to approve the extension of the Order at hand. Additionally, as a member State of the United Nations and based on the Charter, it is critical that Trinidad and Tobago continues to implement that Charter. Currently, the United Nations Security Council has designated already one
individual, according to the sanctions regime on Haiti, namely Jimmy Chérizier, also known as “Barbecue”. And based on the description in the annex of the resolution, “Barbecue” is engaged in acts that threaten the peace, security and stability of Haiti and continues to plan, direct and commit acts that constitute serious human rights abuses. It is therefore necessary to extend the Haiti Order, 2023 until such time as it is revoked so that the prohibitions contained therein continue in effect to ensure technical compliance and implementation.

It is further noted, Madam Speaker, that by a press release of July 31, 2023, the Security Council committee reported that the chair of the committee briefed its members on his most recent visit to Haiti and the Dominican Republic during the period June 12 to 16, 2023.

“The Chair noted that his visit took place almost seven months after the adoption of”—the—“resolution…”—under which we move today—“…during a time when Haiti is facing major political, economic, security and humanitarian challenges and the visit helped to reaffirm the…”—the Security Council’s Resolution—“…and the Committee’s engagement and commitment to working towards the restoration of peace and stability in Haiti.”

Importantly:

“The chair further expressed his view that the adoption of resolution 2653…was a welcome initiative and…there was a shared view among…Haitians whom he met that the imposition of sanctions by the Security Council could contribute to improve the security situation.”

In light of the foregoing, Madam Speaker, today’s Motion is demonstrable
economic sanctions (implementation of united nations security council resolution 2653 (2022) on the republic of haiti) order, 2023 (extension of)
sen. the hon. r. armour sc (cont’d)

evidence of this government’s commitment towards doing its part to ensure the restoration of peace, security and stability for haiti by upholding the implementation of its respective united nations security council resolutions and our international obligations. madam speaker, i beg to move.

hon. members: [desk thumping]

question proposed.

2.20 p.m.

madam speaker: member for naparima.

hon. members: [desk thumping]

mr. rodney charles (naparima): thank you, thank you, madam speaker. i am pleased to join this debate on behalf of the members on this side, representatives of the united national congress. the united nations security council resolution 2653 on haiti was unanimously adopted at the un on october 21, 2022. what did the government bring before this house—june 2023, six months after it was approved by the un security council—eight months, sorry—after it was approved by the security council? as i said before, madam speaker, the first world countries like canada, the uk, the eu brought regulations to put the un security council into effect since november and december last year. their regulations required no extensions. canada’s regulations, madam speaker, state, and i quote: “…it comes into force on a day…”—on which they are—“registered…”

nowhere in the parent act in canada does it give a termination date. if we read between the lines, this means that as long as the un security council resolution is in effect the regulations remain in effect in those countries.

however, in trinidad and tobago under the economic sanctions act we have to
come before this House multiple times to do the same thing. This is how the PNM gives the impression that they are busy doing things, but really nothing is happening.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** We are here, Madam Speaker, today, because under the section 4(3), and that was referred to by the hon. Attorney General, of the Economic Sanctions Act, sanctions are in effect for an initial three months and within those three months we have to come back to Parliament to extend its life.

Madam Speaker, it is wasting parliamentary time.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** It was the same with the economic sanctions against Iran earlier this year. Why not just amend the Economic Sanctions Act so that we do not have to return to the House time and time again to do the same thing. This is how the First World operates, Madam Speaker. Canada, they dealt with it once, they dealt with it months before us and end of the story. We have to come back, we have to come back.

Madam Speaker, this reminds me of the old adage in a calypso about marriage and engagement before marriage. The fella sing, the calypsonian said: “engagement does last too long, leh we do one ting and done”. Let us bring the sanctions, pass the sanctions and sit down. Let us go home, enjoy ourselves. But the PNM has this penchant for marking time, doing the same thing, giving you the impression that they are busy, but nothing happened. I had a boss who used to say, “if the boss pass and you doing nothing, just play yuh busy, find things to do”. And this is what is happening here today. So that is what we are considering
today. Doing adjustments, we should be called here to do adjustments to the Economic Sanctions Act, 1994.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** So we are not prolonging simple processes, doing the same thing over and over, a lot of sound and fury signifying nothing. And you know what, Madam Speaker, you know what? The Economic Sanctions Act, this poor piece of legislation was brought to Parliament by a PNM administration. Madam Speaker, the PNM has a history of bringing poor legislation to Parliament, and this is merely another example. And the practice of bringing poorly drafted legislation to Parliament continues unabated.

Under the last AG it had become the norm being refined to a degree never yet seen—

**Madam Speaker:** So, Member—

**Mr. R. Charles:**—in the history of our Parliament.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Naparima I have allowed you a lot of leeway to make your introduction and so on. What we are debating today is the Order and not the parent legislation or any other legislation. So I remind you, you have had your intro, let us get to the matter, please.

**Mr. R. Charles:** Madam Speaker, the Attorney General referred to the situation in Haiti and I am going to do that right now. We dealt with this before. We are not doing enough for Haiti. Haiti has been a member of Caricom since 2002. We therefore have an obligation, both because of the fact that we are a member of the United Nations and we are bound as a member State by the UN Security Council Resolutions. But more so, because Haiti is part of us, Haiti is part of us
Mr. Charles (cont’d)

geographically, demographically, psychographically and historically, Madam Speaker.Whilst we are happy to hear that Caricom brothers and sisters have—sorry, sorry—yeah, wrong page, wrong page, sorry, and I am talking about the situation in Haiti. And when David Rudder sang, “Haiti I’m sorry”, we have a special fraternal relationship with Haiti. And speaking about the situation, as my colleague opposite did, africane.ws, 06 August, 2023, reported that:

“…experts say…”—and I quote—:
“…gangs have seized control of up to 80% of…”—the capital of Haiti—
“killing, raping and sowing terror in communities already suffering endemic poverty.”

Reports from Al Jazeera, 16th August, that is recently, two weeks ago, said that there was a—quote:

“…surge in violence in part of Haiti’s capital…”—that—“pushed…”—
over—“3,000 people…”—from—“their homes.”

So we are talking essentially about a crisis in a fellow Caricom state. We are talking about the urgency; we are talking about women getting raped; we are talking about a breakdown of law and order; we are talking about a breakdown of law and order. We came in June 2023, to discuss sanctions against Haiti and now three months later here we are again and it comes back to the point that the Government is proficient in wasting time.

Now how will extending these economic sanctions help our Caricom neighbour—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: And us?

Mr. R. Charles: —and us? What is Trinidad and Tobago doing beyond them? A report in the Caribbean National Weekly, September 06, 2023, and that is very
current, said, and I quote:

“The Eminent Persons Group (EPG) from…CARICOM arrived in Haiti…”—this week to engage—“with multiple parties to find common ground for political stabilization and democratic advancement in Haiti.”

And whilst we are happy to hear that our Caricom brothers and sisters have begun discussions, is this all that it will be A talk shop? We are good at hosting conferences, we are good at talking, we are good at passing legislation like we have today, but does it really matter? Does it matter on the ground and are we seeing changes in Haiti as a result of this legislation? My political leader told me before I spoke, is this even benefiting the region and how is it benefiting us?

So we are good at hosting conferences and talking, like the regional conference on crime as a public health emergency, a 3.8 million talk shop that has done nothing to measurably reduce crime. We are good at talking, discussing, reviewing, engaging, analyzing, but what are we actively doing to help our brothers and sisters in Haiti?

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Mr. R. Charles: Madam Speaker, I have visited Haiti on two occasions when I served as the Trinidad and Tobago Ambassador between 2010 and 2014. I was part of a team paid for by Canada of UN Ambassadors tasks with reviewing the UN’s work in Haiti, in discussions in Haiti’s capital Port-au-Prince. I was embarrassed at how little Caricom had done for Haiti. Brazil had troops, thousands of troops in Haiti. One could witness evidence of activities by Canada, by France, by Cuba and others, little by Caricom. So I am sitting there as a Caricom member and talking with these international ambassadors and they are itemizing what they
did, and all I could say is we talked. When invited to visit Haiti on the third occasion, Madam Speaker, I declined. Too much poverty, too much crime, no rule of law being observed, too many women washing clothes in rivers and drains, too much hopelessness, no improvement, it is only so much the soul can take. And I am saying this to raise the consciousness of our Government in terms of we need to do more for Haiti.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** Canada, for example, has taken action on its own and amended their list of sanctioned individuals on June 21, 2023, to include four additional Haitian elites. Since November 22, they have added 21 persons who are implicated in egregious conduct, such as kidnapping, illegal trafficking of firearms and drugs, customs fraud, as well as providing support particularly in the forms of weapons to gangs in Haiti.

Earlier this year, Madam Speaker:

“Canada…will deploy the Royal Canadian Navy vessels off the coast of Haiti….

The vessels…”—have been there to—“conduct surveillance, gather intelligence and maintain a maritime presence off the coast of Haiti…”

That is CNN, February 16, 2023.

Canada may very well be willing to finance the deployment of Caricom troops in Haiti. By its actions and utterances Canada seem willing to find solutions that will restore order and security and create conditions for free and fair elections. But we come here and we pass a legislation, we extend a legislation and PNM style, we have done a lot, we have done enough.
Madam Speaker, I call on this House to approve this legislation, and it means nothing, nothing for the people of Haiti in real, concrete, measurable terms. Madam Speaker, it seems as though other countries are more concerned with Haiti and their well-being than this PNM administration.

Madam Speaker, even far away, Kenya has pledged, quote:

“…to deploy a contingent of 1,000 police officers to help train and assist Haitian police restore normalcy in the country and protect strategic installations.”

This move, criticized by human rights groups, because they say Kenya’s police has a reputation for extrajudicial killings, et cetera, but this move was welcomed by Canada, the US and the UN Secretary General. I got that from the *Guardian*, Saturday 05 August, 2023. We recall in February of this year a contingent from Caricom, including a Trinidad and Tobago representative visited Haiti along with Caricom leaders to, quote:

“Assist in the development of a plan to restore security and the rule of law.”

That was *Newsday*, February 28, 2023.

Then again in mid-July this delegation failed to reach agreement among the Haitian politicians and civil society leaders. I would like to ask Minister Browne—Minister:

“Browne told Newsday that after the mission, a report would be sent to Caricom and the”—Trinidad—“delegation head would report to Prime Minister…”—Dr. Keith Christopher Rowley.

What is the status of this report? We are now in September, that was in February
Mr. Charles (cont’d)

01 and then in mid-July. We are now in September and I would have thought that the hon. Attorney General would have enlightened us in respect of the actual situation which a Trinidad and Tobago delegate was represented.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** Madam Speaker, as I said earlier in my contribution this Government likes to waste its time and waste our time. Experts are dragging their feet while getting nothing done. I want to make a point, a fundamental point, our Venezuelan neighbours, and I am talking this in the context of this resolution on Haiti. Our Venezuelan neighbours have been coming to TT for years. They have had access to registration procedures, work permits, they are being fully integrated into our society, and that is good, that is good. Soon their children will be in our schools, if we could get it right, and we are not complaining on this side, we are happy that we can help our Venezuelan brothers and sisters in their time of crisis.

But what about our Haitian cousins?

Madam Speaker, Haitian citizens must obtain visas before entry into Trinidad and Tobago. So you could come and cry, you could come and cry, but Venezuelans are being treated better than our cousins in Haiti.

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

**Mr. R. Charles:** They must get visas before they come. Let those on the other side deny this.

**2.35 p.m.**

Information on our Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs’ website, under the document titled, “Visa requirements for all countries” says that for Haiti—they specialized Haiti for special treatment—quote:
“Visa not to be issued without prior approval from the Chief Immigration Officer.”

“Doh” come here and tell me and cry crocodile tears for Haiti. You do not care. We are treating citizens of a non-Caricom country, i.e. Venezuela, better than we are treating fellow Caricom citizens of Haiti.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Mr. R. Charles: And for that, we on this side say, “Haiti we are sorry. We are sorry Haiti”. After two and a half months in effect, has it been operationalized? We came here earlier this year and we passed the Motion in June. Has anything been done?

Legal Notice 168 of 2023, referred to as “the Order” in this Motion, makes provision for, one, judicial oversight through the Attorney General—do not leave, Sir. Let me read that again. Let me read it again. Legal Notice 168 of 2023, referred to as “the Order” in this Motion, makes provisions for, one, judicial oversight through the Attorney General applying to a High Court judge for a freezing Order. Secondly—was that correctly, Ma’am? But “ah” getting there. Secondly, procedures to be put in place for a number of circumstances surrounding the freezing and unfreezing of funds.

The question arises: Was the Order operationalized? And I challenge the hon. Attorney General to tell me—not obfuscate—have you applied to a High Court judge for a freezing Order; and if so, what date? And I want the Attorney General, while he is responding, to indicate, has he put in place a number of circumstances for freezing and unfreezing of funds?—circumstances surrounding the freezing and unfreezing of funds. Do the persons responsible and the persons responsible in our
administration have clear instructions on what procedures to follow to operationalize this piece of legislation? Do they have all the required equipment and supplies? Or do we have a situation like for fingerprinting where the thing ran out, something run out, and we do not know why it run out? And when we ask the question the hon. Attorney General says, “Every step”. You know they are very good at obfuscating and generalizing. Every step has been taken to ensure that it does not recur. “So why didn’t it work good in de first place?”

The Government is requesting an extension, however, we hope that it is not just on paper, and the necessary work has been done to make sure that these sanctions reflect the updated UN requirements. Who is keeping track of any amendments that need to be made to the list of sanctioned individuals as Canada has done? In the two and half months since this Act was first passed, has anyone been questioned or detained, or we passed it and we have our dinners in the Parliament, and we go home and we forget it until we remember that “eh, de ting” lapsing in four days? So we have to come quick, quick, quick in the last session in this Parliament to quickly do a clean-up operation to make sure that things work nice. This is how this Government operates. This is how this Government operates.

So I ask again: In the two and half months since this Act was passed has anyone been questioned or detained? Has any investigation been done to determine if there is anyone resident here to which the law may be applicable; or is it a case of what we call LIWO?—L-I-W-O, legislation in words only. Plenty action, plenty talk, calling us back, wasting time. Madam Speaker, let me make the point, I am 75 years—and you know I always “does” say that, 74/75—the little bit “ah” years I have remaining is precious. I cannot be—come, do this, and then do it again, and

Mr. Charles (cont’d)

then do it again, and do it. I do not have time for that, and Trinidad and Tobago does not have time to be marking time. We need to be heading to the 21st Century—

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

**Mr. R. Charles:**—and your job is to carry us kicking and screaming into the 21st Century, not marking time in 17th Century and 18th Century nonsense. Madam Speaker, this is nonsense. This is a waste of my time. This is—“how much minutes I talk here”? For 20 minutes? This is 20 minutes of the four, or five, or six years I have remaining. It is a waste of time, Madam Speaker, and with those few words, I thank you.

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

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

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Fitzgerald Hinds):** Thank you very much. Madam Speaker, if anything could be more appropriately described as a waste of time, it was indeed the last 10 minutes coming from the Member for Naparima.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** He put on a very potent comedy show and he won the applause of the Member for Siparia and others across the floor from us, in a matter that is sufficiently serious to have brought this Government to this Parliament today to extend the effect of an Order that was issued approximately three months or so ago.

The Member for Naparima, Madam Speaker, said two and a half months ago we passed an Act. We did no such thing—comedy. We are dealing here with the
Economic Sanctions Act, which is in the laws of Trinidad and Tobago for many years, perhaps since 1994. What we did in consonance with that Act was to debate a statement issued by Her Excellency gaining the attention of this Parliament, and out of that came an Order in respect of our obligation by virtue of our membership in the United Nations. So I want to debunk the Member’s comedy that we passed an Act of Parliament two and a half years ago.

Madam Speaker, the resolution before us today treats comprehensively with the comedy show that we just witnessed wasting our time. How long did he speak for?

Hon. Members: Too long.

Hon. F. Hinds: Too long. The Resolution, well drafted and clear, and it is gaining our attention not for the first time—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: [Inaudible]

Hon. F. Hinds: Well, as the Member for Siparia—anyway let me not be distracted by her insobriety. Let me say, Madam Speaker, the Resolution says, and I am obliged to quote an element or two of it because the Member for Naparima overlooked a critical line when he regaled us with his comedy a few moments ago.

“Whereas by section 4 of the Economic Sanctions Act, Chap. 81:05…the President may for the purpose of implementing a decision, resolution or recommendation by a regional or international organisation of States or association of States, of which Trinidad and Tobago is a member, that calls on its members to take economic measures against a foreign state make an Order with respect to—

(a) the restriction or prohibition of any of the activities referred to in section 5 in relation to the foreign State;
the seizing, freezing or sequestration in the manner set out in the Order any property situated in Trinidad and Tobago that is held by or on behalf of—

(i) a foreign State;

(ii) any person in that foreign State; or

(iii) a national of that foreign State who does not ordinarily reside in Trinidad and Tobago.”

And, of course, it continues.

The Member asked about listing and any individual. If Trinidad and Tobago detected that there was some property owned by the focus of this Motion in Trinidad and Tobago, it would have taken the action that the Member for Naparima suggested, but there is none so far. But, Madam Speaker, the Motion continues and the most potent line of it—because the Member for Naparima, regaling us in pure comedy, tasteless comedy, time-wasting comedy, tells us that we are coming back, and coming, and coming, and coming again. The very Motion that is in front of us in its resolution states, and I quote for the benefit of the Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Hon. F. Hinds: I quote because I know the difference between silk and silk fig you know. Let me quote for the Member of Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Offensive language will not—

Hon. F. Hinds: It says and it concludes the Motion “eh”. After all of the recitals, whereas this, whereas that, whereas the other, too long for me to go into now, but the Resolution says, “Be it resolved”. That is what is in front of us today:
"Be it resolved that the Order shall remain in force until such time as it is revoked."

You understand.

Madam Speaker, they waste our time. And then the Member went on to talk about Caricom and this is all about paper. Well this paper is absolutely necessary, because it is in consonance with the law of Trinidad and Tobago. It is in consonance with our obligations as a member of the United Nations as I have just read and, therefore, this paper as he fleetingly and in comedy called it, is critical. But he went on to ask, what else are we doing, implying that all we do is pass the law and that is the end of it.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** That is what he is wanting to suggest. But, of course, nothing the UNC does or says could be believed or taken seriously. And for those of us who did any elements of criminology, we know criminogenic tendencies when we see them. So it is to that extent that we take them seriously, with an eye as a criminologist.

Madam Speaker, let me say, Madam Speaker, that only recently Caricom engaged at one of its sessions the issue of Haiti. I was present probably about two and half years ago when the Haiti question came up in a Caricom Heads meeting at the Hilton in Port of Spain—not for the first time. We have been—Caricom, including Trinidad and Tobago, has been paying close attention to the goings on in Haiti. In fact, Caricom was working very tightly and very closely with the now deceased President Moïse, asking him, working with him. I am aware of that. I was present at the meeting in support of our Prime Minister on that occasion to deal with some
of the instability that existed even at that time in Haiti. Today, I must tell you it has gotten severely worse. And as we all know, for those of us who read C.L.R. James’ *Black Jacobins*, and who studied the history of this region, Haiti’s troubles began as long ago as 1804.

And, Madam Speaker, the situation in Haiti today is that Haiti is, and I think correctly described, as a failed State. And I so describe it, and the world will so describe it, because all of the institutions of that State have come under severe weakening threat and attack, to some extent, non-existent. Because the criminal gangs, led by a particular criminal gang leader to whom these sanctions are largely directed, has attacked and destroyed—the police as you heard, well earlier correctly, the police organization is under attack. A few months ago on one occasion 700 police officers resigned and fled Haiti.

**2.50 p.m.**

United Nations reports demonstrating that they are having difficulty dealing with the gangs that have been growing and their reach taking control of more and more of the physical space in Haiti. Taking control of ports, taking control of health centres, water facilities, electricity facilities. It is as bad as that.

**Hon. Member:** [ Interruption ]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And Caricom has been addressing that issue a long time ago.

I can tell you. He is asking what Caricom is doing. What I can tell him is that no major nation today, not the United States, not Canada—although Canada has contributed a lot, to date, in this battle, in this struggle, in this response—no major nation of the world has put troops on the ground inside of Haiti. None, to date. President Henry has been calling for an international force. Kenya has pledged
Hon. F. Hinds (cont’d)

1,000 troops, all true but not one nation has put boots on the ground so far.

Mr. Charles: “What you doing?”

Hon. F. Hinds: So he asked again in his comedy.

Hon. Member: “Duppy.”

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member.

Hon. F. Hinds: The hon. Member, the honourable comedian.

Mr. Charles: 405 murders.

Hon. F. Hinds: Madam Speaker, Mr. Holness, the Prime Minister of Jamaica speaking on behalf of Caricom, informed that:

“CARICOM will offer support to Haiti in key priority areas…”

These—“…include humanitarian support, security, and election organization. Additionally…”—he said the regional body will provide—“…personnel, training, and capacity building to the Haitian National Police Force.”

It is not an external enemy that has gone into Haiti. It is internal, it is social, it is civil and therefore the police organization, the Haitian National Police is critical in this. So the Member correctly reminded us that earlier this year at the call of Canada who is leading some of this response, Trinidad and Tobago did send an expert to assist in the rebuilding of the Haitian police service, the Haitian National Police. They reached out and they asked and we promptly did that along with other countries, Jamaica and others in the region, to recruit and to train police officers and that was shortly after 700 or 800 of them demitted office.

Madam Speaker, that is not all. CARICOM IMPACS, on behalf of Caricom, took note of the fact that that Haitian problem has started to directly impact Jamaica and
Turks and Caicos and countries close to it as that. And CARICOM IMPACS has been taking action to increase the flow of information and intelligence sharing, especially as it relates to firearms and trafficking in persons, with the US as it relates to Haiti because a lot of firearms going into Haiti, just like is happening in Trinidad and Tobago, are known to be originating in the United States.

I recall about two years ago, Madam Speaker, I was astounded, I brought it to the attention of several of my Cabinet colleagues. The lead honcho in Haiti, a fella they call “Barbecue”.

**Hon. Member:** What?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** A fella they call “Barbecue”. That is his nickname, a former police officer. I will tell you his correct name in a minute, Jimmy Chérizier. He was on the papers of the world because I saw the picture, I was abroad at the time and I saw it. He along with about 30 others of his gang with automatic weapons threatening the United States, Madam Speaker, that they will kill a student citizen of the United States who they had kidnapped in Haiti and I saw that. No mask, no hiding, the brazenness was there and that is about two years ago. I was astounded by it.

**Hon. Member:** [Interruption]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** And so they are asking what—I am telling them what Caricom is doing, I am telling them. The Member asked.

**Hon. Member:** [Interruption]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** The Member asked so I am telling him. And therefore, Caricom has stated and it remains poised and it has already begun to support Haiti in coming back from this morass that it has found itself in at this stage.
I want to say a little word, Madam Speaker, about the business of sanctions. I want to say a little bit about the business of sanctions. Sanctions as imposed by the United Nations, they have worked effectively on some occasions and some occasions, not. I recall as a younger man, there were sanctions imposed against apartheid in South Africa; did not seem to work at all. Many countries that pretended to be a part of that, in fact were not and continued trading with South Africa. Only very recently in the Ukraine situation, sanctions were purportedly imposed against Russia. It has not seemed to deter Russia from its activity there and I make no judgment as to that but I am just talking about the aspect of sanctions. And, Madam Speaker, it did not seem to work against Iran in any major way.

Recently, sanctions in Venezuela and I pay more attention to that because of course, Venezuela is next door and conditions in Venezuela affect us directly in Trinidad and Tobago and let me say in passing, that the conditions in Haiti have not yet begun to directly impact us in Trinidad and Tobago. Some of the countries of the region have begun to get direct impact. But I want to say I pay more attention to what is going on in Venezuela and recently, we took some note of that at an international forum and commented upon it. So sanctions have varying impact. And these sanctions here are intended to go after those inside of Haiti who have destroyed by their gangsterism the institutions of Haiti and who, Madam Speaker, continue to grow and these sanctions are really targeted at that group and those groups; gangs, because the Motion spells out that in one of its recitals.

The people of Haiti who are suffering from all that is happening, this failed State and the presence and growth of the gangs in Haiti doing the things that we are
familiar with, so unfortunately, they are the ones, you know, it is like they are the rope in the tug of war. They are being pulled hither, thither and yon. So much so that last weekend, a church in Haiti, I think a Catholic church, right, they had their members do a walk against crime and against the gangsterism that has taken over Haiti and while they were on that exercise, a gang or gangs opened fire and killed several of them. That is how brazen and bad the thing is.

So my concern, if I may put it that way, is that as we do the right thing by supporting as we must as a state, a nation state that is Trinidad and Tobago and take action as a state to impose sanctions on that society, it has to be properly well targeted and hopefully it will have more effect on the gangs and to whom it is intended and focused, rather than on the people as has happened in some cases where sanctions have been applied. That will be my concern because the people of Haiti have been suffering for a long, long time. In fact, there are some people who will think that applying sanctions on Haiti is ironic—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Exactly.

Hon. F. Hinds:—especially since Haiti has been in the condition it has been in since 1804 and going forward. However, the focus is on those inside of Haiti who have created the conditions of which we speak in the immediate situation and therefore my support for the measure as offered by the Attorney General as has been supported by our friends on the other side because they know that this is an international obligation. They know it is consonant with the law and Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Charles: “Buh wah you do?”

Hon. F. Hinds: But, Madam Speaker, they have to find something to croak and
Economic Sanctions (Implementation of
United Nations Security Council Resolution
2653 (2022) On The Republic of Haiti) Order,
2023 (Extension of)
Hon. F. Hinds (cont’d)

quake about.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Four hundred and three murders.

Hon. F. Hinds: Yes, 403 “maarders”. “Yuh heard the Silk?” You heard the Silk, with a twisted false accent?

Madam Speaker: Member, Member.

Mr. Tancoo: Immaturity.

Hon. F. Hinds: I am obliged.

Madam Speaker: Okay. I will just ask you to withdraw that, you know, please.

Hon. F. Hinds: I withdraw that. Madam Speaker. Thank you very much, without more.

So, Madam Speaker, as I rise in support of this Motion and urge all of my colleagues in this House, I take note of the fact that Canada has directed and working closely with Caricom, it was a Canadian initiative that we fully supported as Caricom and Trinidad and Tobago sent personnel into that arrangement for the training of those police officers. Canada has been making its contribution, working along with Caricom. For an example, Canada would have directed over CAN $100 million to this effort working along with others. $100 million in international assistance, in health, education, governance, security, in the fight against corruption and impunity, economic growth and climate change, inside of Haiti you know, since 2022.

And I listened to the Member for Naparima speaking hypocritically on behalf of his “hypocryte” friends, if I may twist the pronunciation just a wee bit with your leave, Madam Speaker. I heard him talking about we are not doing anything for Haitians in Trinidad and Tobago. There are Haitians in Trinidad and
Tobago who have gotten a resident status and all the other facilities available under the Laws of Trinidad and Tobago.

In fact, when we opened up in 2018, in our migrant registration framework on the basis of sound government policy, when they were protesting about the number of Venezuelans in Trinidad and Tobago and saying that they are going to be voting for one party as against them, we established a migrant registration framework and it was open not only to the Venezuelans but all non-nationals, everyone who was here illegally. That is what we did. We invited all to come hither and they came and we registered 16,500 of them. All were invited, all.

And to tell you why I used the word “hypocryte”, “hypo-quite”—“that mean they gone real far in it”, you know, Madam Speaker; deep. When Dominica had its crisis with some natural disaster, some hurricane, a few years ago, that UNC, when this Government announced that we wanted to invite Dominicans to come here—

Mr. Tancoo: Madam Speaker, 48(1). This has nothing to do with the Order presently before the House being debated.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

3:05 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Okay. So, Member for Laventille West, while I understand that in a way you are rebutting, I will ask you really to stick within the confines of this Order and the debate, please.

Hon. F. Hinds: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It was the Member for Naparima who did a bit of a comparison between the way we purportedly treat Haitians. And let me tell you, that statement he made there is not to be taken lightly, you know. Let me just, before I continue, quote—let me just quote for you, Madam Speaker.
Let me quote for you. Because I have listened to that Member for Naparima, you know. I heard him actually tell this country that the PNM Government do not like black people, you know. I heard him say that.

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Speaker—

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I heard him say that.

**Madam Speaker:** Yeah, yeah, but—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** [Inaudible]—withdraw that.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** He said so.

**Dr. Moonilal:** 48(6), 48(4).

**Dr. Moonilal:** 48(6), 48(4) and something else.

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I will ask you to withdraw that. I did not hear that in this debate.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I withdraw it because you did not hear it in this debate, so I withdraw it.

**Hon. Members:** [Crosstalk]

**Madam Speaker:** Member, I have ruled. Please move on and be quite careful.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** I thank you very much. I thank you. But I am simply saying, as I move on, that that statement that we treat Haitians differently to the way we treat Venezuelans has a poisonous element to it; one that I cannot ignore.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Visas.

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Because I have been a victim of poison, I cannot ignore it but I am moving on. I am moving on.

So, Madam Speaker, Canada continues to play that leadership role. And it
Hon. F. Hinds (cont’d)

was in March that I said that we—they announced an additional $100 million to deal with the re-establishment of the police force that Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, and other countries of the region participated in, recognizing, as I said earlier, this is a civil crisis and it has to be done. It has to be done. And it has to be done in that way. As for Caricom—as for—

**Hon. Member: [Interruption]**

“The Heads of Government…”—

**Madam Speaker:** Member, may I just advise, you have three more minutes of original speaking time. You are entitled to a further 15 minutes to wind up your contribution if you wish. Are you going to avail yourself?

**Hon. F. Hinds:** Most certainly, Madam Speaker. Now start to wax, truthful, and they do not want to hear it. They are afraid of the truth.

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** They do not like—they like darkness, if I may use a metaphor. They do not like the light of the truth. But as for me and my house, we deal with the truth—

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

**Hon. F. Hinds:** —soberly and powerfully. Madam Speaker, the:

“Heads of Government of the…”—Caricom—“…Community…at their 44th Regular Meeting...”—that is February the 15th to the 17th—“...reiterated that the Community must play a leadership role in addressing the deteriorating situation in Haiti, a Member State of the Community, towards which there are moral and political obligations.”

This is a statement from the Heads at the 44th Regular Meeting. The:
“Heads affirmed that decisive action is needed at the earliest opportunity by CARICOM in view of the mounting insecurity and its widespread impact on all facets of Haitian life.”

You hear the depth of the concern?

“The Heads of Government were joined in part of their discussions by the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada.”

They were joined by Mr. Trudeau.

“The Heads of Government acknowledged the adoption of the December 21, 2022 political agreement,”—called—“the National Consensus for an Inclusive Transition and Transparent Elections, launched by the Honourable Ariel Henry, the Interim Prime Minister of Haiti, but were of the view that it needed to be more inclusive.”

You see the intimate engagement by Caricom in the affairs of Haiti? And yet the Member for Naparima gets here today and misleadingly tells us that Caricom, and Trinidad and Tobago, which is a part of Caricom, playing a leadership role in Caricom—

**Hon. Members:** [Laughter]

**Hon. F. Hinds:** “Eh”?—not describing our colleagues as some ATM machine and not failing to show up at important meetings and at nine o’clock you still have on curlers and nightie. Real engagement, real engagement.

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

3.10 p.m.

Eh? Whether yellow nightie or blue nightie, same nightie, and this is it. Madam Speaker, in this regard the heads of government agreed to convene at an
early meeting of stakeholders in Jamaica.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Speaker, sorry to disturb you, 48(4). The Member is making all types of statements about nightclothes and so on, that I think you should rule. Sorry again to trouble you, Ma’am.

Madam Speaker: Member, you know better than that. Please withdraw and be careful, yes.

Hon. F. Hinds: Madam Speaker. Okay, Madam Speaker, I withdraw the word “nightie.”

Madam Speaker: Remember—

Hon. F. Hinds: [Inaudible]

Madam Speaker: No, no, no, no no. Just withdraw it, okay. And you know we have got to be careful about the messages that we send.

Hon. F. Hinds: But Madam Speaker, all I am saying is that at the 44th Heads of Government, all members, particularly and including, of course, the Member for Diego Martin West was present, well attired for business, sober, and conducted Caricom’s businesses in a dignified manner.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Hon. F. Hinds: “Dais all I am saying. Dais all I am saying.” They also agreed to participate in a meeting to be convened in Haiti with Haitian stakeholders to assist in a development plan to restore security and the rule of law. The Heads of Government noted the various forms of security assistance provided by the Government of Canada and placed emphasis on strengthening the capacity of the Haitian National Police to protect the general population from criminal activities. Because what transpired in Haiti, you know, Madam Speaker, is that the police and
the defence and the army came under serious attack, and in some cases fled. And it is an example to the rest of the world, not the least Trinidad and Tobago as to what is possible when we do not hold up our institutions, when we take action to weaken them, and that is why, Madam Speaker, the Caricom Heads had to pronounce in the way they did. And Caricom member States are calling for global multinational security support with appropriate jurisdictional mandate aimed at restoring peace and stability in Haiti.

Speaking on behalf of Caricom during the United Nations Council meeting on Haiti, on Thursday, July 06, Prime Minister Holness made the announcement that I spoke about recently.

So Madam Speaker, with those things said, I would like to close by thanking the Attorney General on behalf of the Government for bringing this measure here for its renewal, and to ensure that the action that the world has chosen to take in support of the suffering people of Haiti is properly, legally, and constitutionally taken. And I feel confident to say, contrary to the Member for Naparima, that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago as part of CARICOM stands very ready to continue to provide support to our brother in this region.

And I close by just reminding us, not so much Trinidad and Tobago but the international community, as you impose these sanctions they must be imposed in a skilful and in a— with precision so that it will not bring. In other words, it must be buttressed with financial intelligence and understand what is going on behind the scenes and where the guns and the money to support the guns, and the drugs, and the human trafficking, where all of that is flowing from. Which is why I told you CARICOM IMPACS is up to with our Crime and Gang Intelligence Unit at the

Caricom level now, and they must therefore focus these sanctions on those to whom they are directed and minimize its impact on the ordinary people of Haiti who are already experiencing deep suffering. Madam Speaker, with those few words, I thank you very kindly.

Madam Speaker: Member for Princes Town.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Dr. Moonilal: Return some sense to this thing.

Mr. Barry Padarath (Princes Town): Madam Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to join this debate on a very critical Motion before the Parliament. Madam Speaker, after listening to the last Member, I understand why the Member for Naparima has been asking the Minister, who is stopping the cocaine from passing?

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Mr. B. Padarath: You see, Madam Speaker, when you have to descend into yellow and blue nightie in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago—

Hon. Member: Ooooh.

Mr. B. Padarath:—you can surely tell that the sound—

Madam Speaker: We already dealt with that. Okay. So please, withdraw that, and continue.

Mr. B. Padarath: I withdraw, Madam.

Madam Speaker: Yeah.

Mr. B. Padarath: Madam, I will rephrase that. When you have to descend—

Mr. Indarsingh: To hopping for lingerie.

Mr. B. Padarath:—into articles of clothing in the Parliament of Trinidad and
Tobago, you can surely tell that the sound whooping the PNM got in the local government elections—

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

**Mr. B. Padarath:**—at the hands of Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC, the UNC, has left them with a political tabanca.

Madam Speaker, the Member for Laventille West dodged, duck, run, from answering the critical questions the Member for Naparima raised on behalf of the Opposition. Madam Speaker, particularly there were two areas that the Minister of National Security, the Member for Laventille West, did not address. And that has to do with the critical role that Trinidad and Tobago plays in the quasi Cabinet of Caricom. And no one has raised in the public domain the responsibility that Trinidad and Tobago has as the representative that deals in the quasi-Cabinet of Caricom that deals with region security, Madam Speaker.

And therefore, one would have thought that the Member for Laventille West would be in the know with respect to Trinidad and Tobago’s position of sending troops whether it is from Trinidad and Tobago or the Caricom in terms of putting boots on the ground, and we have done so in the past in different circumstances in Haiti and other Caricom nations, Madam Speaker. But in an effort to duck and run, the Member for Laventille West refused to answer the critical questions of Trinidad and Tobago’s position as it relates to Trinidad and Tobago holding the seat in the quasi Cabinet of Caricom with responsibility for regional security.

That, Madam Speaker, is an indictment on the Prime Minister who serves in the quasi Cabinet of CARICOM as it relates to regional security and development, Madam Speaker that is a shame.

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

Mr. B. Padarath: The Member for Naparima, Madam Speaker, spoke about the change in visa requirements, and it was a pointed question that was asked of the Member for Laventille West, as to how did we arrive at that? Are all CARICOM states taking a similar position as it relates to immigration matters, Madam Speaker?

Again, the Member for Laventille West instead sought to lecture us on this side about sanctions. Let me remind the Member for Laventille West about his government’s history with sanctions in Trinidad and Tobago. You see, it is that Government, that Minister of National Security, that Prime Minister of the People’s National Movement that allowed a sanctioned plane from Venezuela to land here in Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Mr. B. Padarath: That allowed a sanctioned Vice-President Delcy Rodriguez to enter with representatives of PDVSA and then claim ignorance. But you see, Madam Speaker, we refuse to be lectured by the real hypocrites that sit across from us, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Mr. B. Padarath: Madam Speaker, the Member for Laventille—for Naparima sorry, spoke about review and amendments to the sanction. Over 100 nations have signed on to these sanctions, Madam Speaker, and the Member for Naparima bordered on raising issues of laziness. Laziness in the context, Madam Speaker, of looking at strengthening or making amendments, as several other countries have done.
Madam Speaker, several other nations have looked at reviewing the amendments to see where we were and where we are today in terms of Haiti, in terms of these economic sanctions and the implication that it has for their political stability as well as national security issues that are currently in Haiti at this time.

Madam Speaker, another major failure of either speakers of the Government today was to deal with Trinidad and Tobago’s position as—

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Mr. B. Padarath:—a member of CARICOM but as their lead in terms of what advice we have offered to CARICOM. And I will tell you why I asked this, Madam Speaker. We have been advocating for the free movement of nationals across all Caribbean nations. And that free movement has specific implications for Trinidad and Tobago because the other CARICOM nations as part of our role, our responsibility in that quasi-Cabinet is to advise under security arrangements of what prospects or what advice we would give in terms of immigration matters among member states. Not one word of that, Madam Speaker. The Member for Laventille West will have us believe that a golfing Prime Minister who spends all of his time on the golf course turns up at a meeting at 9.00 a.m. but cannot offer one piece of advice to Caricom as it relates to the issue of the free movement—

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Mr. B. Padarath:—of Caribbean nationals across the Caricom—

Ms. Ameen: “He running away.”

Mr. B. Padarath:—specifically related to Haitians who we have now imposed Visa requirements and Visa sanctions on, Madam Speaker. And there is a deafening silence coming from the Government on those issues because they have

Mr. Padarath (cont’d)

abdicated their responsibility to the people of CARICOM and more so the people of Haiti, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Mr. B. Padarath: Madam Speaker, I want to turn your attention to a publication dated January 24, 2023, coming out of the United States, it says:

“U.S. says it will propose new Haitian targets for U.N. sanctions.”

In a Reuters article:

“The United States said on Tuesday it will propose further targets in Haiti for U.N. sanctions, a move broadly backed by China as the Caribbean country battles cholera and severe food shortages compounded by widespread violence from criminal gangs.”

Madam Speaker, you are hearing about food shortages in Haiti, but I am not surprised that this Government does not care about food shortages in Haiti, they do not even care about food shortages in Tobago—

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, yes, yes.

Mr. B. Padarath:—far less for Haiti. Madam Speaker, it goes on to say:

“The 15...”— Assembly members of the—“...U.N. Security Council agreed in October to impose an asset freeze, travel ban and arms embargo on anyone who threatens the peace or stability of Haiti, naming the country’s most powerful gangster as its first target.”

The—“U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Gutierrez has also proposed that ‘a rapid action force’ be sent to Haiti to help police combat gangs - a move also requested by Haiti’s government.”

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Madam Speaker, one can tell by the contribution from the Member for Laventille West, together with all publications that are in the public domain from member States of the United Nations including those of Caricom that we agree that Haiti needs to get a handle of their police service. But Madam Speaker, we are in a situation today where it is clear to all and sundry, including members of the United States that Haiti needs intervention with respect to restoring peace, security, and justice as it relates to their police service.

But Madam Speaker, that was the exact point that the Member for Naparima raised. The Member for Naparima is raising in the context of not only Trinidad and Tobago but member states of Caricom and the United Nations, that we know what the problem is, we know what the solution is, but what have you done to advance these solutions?

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

**Mr. B. Padarath:** And the Member for Laventille West could not honestly stand up in this House and say that the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has done A, B, C, one, two, three. They have done nothing, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. B. Padarath:** Zero.

**3.25 p.m.**

**Mr. B. Padarath:** Madam Speaker, the publication says:

"Haitians overwhelmingly want this assistance so they can go about their daily lives in peace..."—the representative—"...said. ‘Gang related..."
violence has reached levels not seen in decades. Murders and kidnappings increase in a fourth consecutive year.’

The deputy U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Robert Wood, said that Washington was encouraged that U.N. sanctions ‘had deterred who would carry out and finance violence, causing Haiti’s instability.’”

This is from the deputy US ambassador, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, many instances—and I heard the Member speak about Dominica in the context of today’s debate. But Madam Speaker, when you have important positions and persons like the US deputy ambassador sharing information like this about amending the sanctions and the need to amend the sanctions, and then you listen to the Member for Laventille West speak about Dominica, I want to remind the Member for Laventille West, Madam Speaker, it was inside of the Organization of American States that, on a directive from the Trinidad and Tobago Government, our representative there voted against Dominica.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Mr. B. Paradath: That is on the record. And, therefore, when you want to advance support in the area of diplomacy and international relations, they say you must put your money where your mouth is.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Mr. B. Paradath: Trinidad and Tobago voted against Dominica.

Mr. Indarsingh: When they were in dire need of help.

Mr. B. Padarath: So whether or not they are blue, they are yellow, they are red, Madam Speaker, the Member for Laventille West cannot get away from the public record of what the red has done to the people of Dominica and the people of Haiti.
Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Mr. B. Paradath: Madam Speaker, I want to deal a bit with the issues of the economic situation that currently exists in Haiti and I will tell you why. Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to speak in this Parliament on the last sanction that was brought and that had to do with Iran, and the Government— When the Attorney General spoke he chastised me for saying, well, why are you going? And you are talking about there must be amendments and so on when there is consensus? Madam Speaker, the one consensus that there appears to be on the issue of Haiti is that intervention is needed. Who are the brave souls willing to advance this cause is yet to be seen. But, Madam Speaker, the economic situation in Haiti is this. As we all know:

“Haiti is the poorest country in the hemisphere. More than half the population lives under the poverty line, and many people rely on subsistence farming to feed their families. The country is also heavily dependent on external revenue: between 2010 and 2020, the United Nations allocated more than $13 billion in international aid for Haiti, most of which has funded disaster-relief missions and development program. Meanwhile, remittances from the Haitian diaspora have steadily risen over the last few years, totaling a record $3.8 billion...in 2020, or nearly 24 per cent of Haiti’s gross domestic product... “Since 2010, trade has composed 43 per cent of Haiti’s GDP on average. The country’s major industries include sugar...”—cane—“flour milling...cement, and textile manufacturing; textiles accounted for 86 per
Mr. Padarath (cont’d)

...cent of all exports in 2020. The United States is Haiti’s largest trade partner, followed by Canada and Mexico.”

Madam Speaker, it goes on to say:

“In recent years, natural disasters, disease, political instability, mismanagement of humanitarian relief, and a depreciation of...Haiti’s currency have strained economy. Tourism, once a vibrant sector, has declined. Compared to record 1.3 million tourists in 2018, which drew in $620 million, Haiti welcomed only 938,000 travelers in 2019...”

Madam Speaker, the economic history of Haiti, as it currently stands, it says that in:

“That same year, the neighbouring Dominican Republic welcomed nearly 7.6 million tourists. However, the COVID-19 pandemic”—like many others including Tobago and several other Caricom regions—“significantly reduced travel and economic activity in both countries.”

Madam Speaker, this is the important point. It says:

“International lenders canceled Haiti’s debt following a massive earthquake in 2010, but its borrowing...”—have raised significantly—“to about $3.57 billion, including nearly $2 billion from PetroCaribe—the Venezuela-led regional alliance that offers its members subsidized oil. Further upheaval, including an escalating protest movement, the 2021 assassination of President...Moïse, back-to-back natural disasters in July and August...and rampant gang violence has placed further stress on the country’s economic situation.”
Madam Speaker, that provides the backdrop of the political instability and the situation as it relates to crime and security in Haiti as we currently speak, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, when the Member for Naparima spoke about the need to review these sanctions, it was against knowing what was happening with Haiti’s economic status and economic situation in the global context of many of its debts having been written off, even from countries within the Caricom, to also putting itself back into a lot of these debts, Madam Speaker. But, what did those economic debts that we are—and those sanctions that we are attempting to deal with today, bring? It brought tremendous amount of political instability, Madam Speaker, and that political instability has created a lot of challenges for Haiti that today in local parlance we say Haiti cannot even “ketch” themselves. But, Madam Speaker, it is interesting to hear what members of the United Nations—what their positions are separate and apart from a Caricom/Trinidad and Tobago perspective, and I want to turn your attention, Madam Speaker, to the 9247th meeting of the United Nations. The heading says:

“Key Political Developments, Sanctions Offer Hope to Haiti’s Recovery if Supported by International Community, Special Representative Tells the Security Council”—of the United Nations.

Madam Speaker, I want to pay particular attention to the representatives coming from Haiti themselves, and this is what Haiti is saying to the UN Security Council at a special meeting where all member States were present, separate and apart from the Security Council, Madam Speaker. And I quote:

Mr. Padarath (cont’d)

“Helen La Lime, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti, and Head of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti...updated the 15-nation organ on the worsening humanitarian and security developments, which included close to 5 million people facing acute hunger, unprecedented levels of gang violence and ‘not one elected official left in the country…””

Madam Speaker, can you imagine that? I repeat, the representative at the UN Security Council representing Haiti lamented:

“…not one elected official is left in the country.’’”

Dr. Moonilal: Wow!

Mr. B.: Madam Speaker, if that does not jolt us into reality and into action, I do not know what will. There are some in Caricom and in other countries, maybe some will even say right here in Trinidad and Tobago, that it feels as though we are living in a dictatorship, Madam Speaker. But, in Haiti, that reality confronts you in the black and white, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, it goes on to say that:

“Despite this, she called attention to notable progress being made, with sanctions creating space for additional political dialogue and necessary reform, including encouraging developments in the judiciary and the reduction of pre-trial detention levels.”

Madam Speaker, the representative for Haiti called on the Council to facilitate the immediate deployment of a specialized international force. And what is this specialized international force? Madam Speaker, this is not gibberish. This is not Haiti just throwing out words there. This is Haiti identifying the help that it needs. And, therefore, when one speaks about the economic sanctions that are being imposed, it cannot be that the economic sanctions are imposed in a vacuum. We
have seen what that economic sanctions imposition has done to a country like Cuba. And therefore, if we are really serious—and I notice that our current Government has been advancing the issue of Cuba in the Caricom region and the Caricom organization. But, looking at the situation that Haiti is in, and the years of these embargoes that Cuba has endured, what we can learn from that is that while you cripple the people that are asking for help, very little change has come outside of just creating massive amounts of poverty. And, therefore, Madam Speaker, when representatives tell the United Nations Security Council that they need a specialized international force they also say:

“‘We have continued repeating the fact that the situation is grave and that a great deal more action is needed—there is no room for complacency…’

There cannot be fair, transparent and democratic elections nor the restoration of its institutions without security…”

So, Madam Speaker, we can speak ad nauseam about the economic implications that these sanctions impose, but critical institutions like the Judiciary, the Elections Commission, the Office of the President, the Parliament of Haiti—we are being told that none of these things exists and therefore, there is no law and order. Madam Speaker, it is a recipe for chaos and anarchy, and therefore, the challenge remains that the onus remains on us—that we know what the problem is, we know what the solution is, but who is leading the charge? And I respectfully say that while we point fingers at Canada, as I heard from the Member for Laventille West speak about Canada should be doing this and they did that and do the other—what is Trinidad and Tobago doing—

**Hon. Members:** [Desk thumping]
Mr. B. Padarath: —as the lead—

Dr. Moonilal: Good point.

Mr. B. Padarath: —for regional security in the quasi-Cabinet of Caricom?

Madam Speaker, I want to share with you something that is startling coming out and emanating from:

“Key Political Developments, Sanctions Offer Hope to Haiti’s Recovery if Supported by International Community, Special Representative tells Security Council”.

And it says, Madam Speaker:

“Echoing that, the representative of France also spotlighted and effectively support the Haitian National Police, including through equipment, funding and training. Sanctions alone, however, will not solve all the country’s problems, as rebuilding justice is an imperative. Fighting against impunity and strengthening the entire criminal justice system must be a priority to bring an end to the violence, she stressed.”

And this is a colonial master of Haiti saying this, Madam Speaker, at that meeting. But what was interesting Madam Speaker, was that the next representative to speak was the United Kingdom, and the United Kingdom’s delegate had this to say:

“…while noting her country’s readiness to consider further sanctions designations,”—she—“underscored that sanctions alone do not offer a solution.”

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]
Mr. B. Padarath: “‘Now is the time for Haitians to come together to address the political impasse’ and tackle the deeply rooted challenges blighting their daily lives…”

Madam Speaker, those are some words that are not new to us. Often, in local parlance, we tend to say Haiti is a blight country because of the challenges that they continue to face. That was sung in many calypsos, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

Mr. Young: What calypso?

Mr. B. Padarath: —I will refer you to that later on. But, Madam Speaker, you have listened to not only Caricom who has a major stake in this issue. Well you have heard from representatives of France, the United Kingdom, where it appears that we are all on the same page. But, Madam Speaker, as I wrap up, I want to remind Trinidad and Tobago and those that have a stake in the restoration of Haiti, Madam Speaker, that the Member for Naparima did not just come here and complain. The UNC did not just point out what were the goals and what were the challenges on the last two sanctions including this one. What we are saying is what is important, as advanced by the United States, and this is out of pure laziness, Madam Speaker—

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Mr. B. Padarath: —to come to the Parliament, and just say let us pass this again because this is an international obligation. Trinidad and Tobago has a lot of international obligations. We are a member State of many of these international organizations. But whether or not it is from the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, or the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal...

Mr. Padarath (cont’d)

Affairs, Madam Speaker, in today’s presentation both from the Attorney General and the Member for Laventille West, there is a large degree of laziness—

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Mr. B. Padarath: —to advance meaningful amendment, recommendations, and solutions, particularly in the areas of immigration, Madam Speaker, in particular our position as it relates to truly demonstrating free movement across the Caricom, which includes Haiti, a member State of the Caricom. But also, Madam Speaker, looking to see how we can strengthen the economic sanctions so that it has a positive impact on restoring justice and restoring the police service.

3.40 p.m.

Those were some of the areas that both myself and the Member for Naparima have advanced, and, Madam Speaker, it is my sincere hope that we will hear a bit more in the public space and from the Attorney General in terms of what is Trinidad and Tobago’s position. We have heard the complaints that they are saying, but Kenya—the Member for Laventille West is saying but they are talking all this great fancy talk but they are not putting their money where their mouth is. They are not saying that they are willing to do so. It is our responsibility as the lead for national—for security—sorry—and regional development to take that role, and what we want to hear from the Government is, are you willing to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago, together with other Caricom states, that we lead the effort—that we, Trinidad and Tobago, lead the effort?

We do not abdicate that responsibility and say, “We will leave it for Guyana or leave it for Barbados”, but we will take that responsibility and stop crying and complaining and bringing these sanctions without bringing any meaningful
solutions, and that is the point that the Untied National Congress is making. But, Madam Speaker, I understand maybe why we are seeing so much laziness; they are refusing to review legislation. That political “tabanca” that I told you about earlier, Madam Speaker, that has them in a quandary that up to today the People’s National Movement cannot “ketch” themselves from the sweet—the sweet—I would not use that other word, Madam Speaker, but except to say, but they have a sweet “tabanca” for Kamla Persad-Bissessar and the UNC, but surely as night follows day, the sun will rise again, and we will be able to bring meaningful solutions to these sanctions that will have a significant impact on the lives of the people of Haiti and of Caricom, Madam Speaker. I thank you.

Dr. Moonilal: Well done, well done.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker: The Attorney General.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

The Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Reginald Armour SC): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to respond, and I hope that my response will be taken to have some substance, if not sound bites.

Hon. Members: [Laughter]

Sen. The Hon. R. Armour SC: The Member for Naparima remarkably allowed himself, in my view, to trivialize the fact that we have come to this House to renew the Order which has already been passed by this House, and to renew it for an indefinite period, and he has attempted to trivialize it in terms which I think, quite frankly, do a disservice to the people of Haiti.
Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Sen. The Hon. R. Armour SC: Because the fact that we take the time and the trouble to come to this House to ask this House to renew the Order is because we care about the people of Haiti.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Sen. The Hon. R. Armour SC: So asking the Members on the other side to debate the passage of the Order, which is the resolution which is before this House, is not to waste the time of the House. That is my first point. fact, I thought it necessary to make that point because, given the injury which the people of Haiti have suffered for hundreds of years.

Hon. Member: We suffer more here.

Sen. The Hon. R. Armour SC:—And in the face of the current Caricom initiatives which are underway, it is psychological PTSD to claim that by us asking the people of this country in this House, through their elected representatives, to commit to this Resolution is to do psychological injury to the people of Haiti.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Sen. The Hon. R. Armour SC: The Member for Naparima sought in his contribution to suggest that there is some discrimination about the fact that visas are required for Haitians while he was speaking about Venezuelans, and the fact of the matter is that both Haitians and Venezuelans are required to have visas to enter this country, so there is no question of discrimination. And the rationale for requiring visas is part of the very security that we have to ensure we put in place; one of the reasons why we are here today so that the trafficking of persons, the movement of persons into and out of Trinidad can be addressed from a security
point of view by the requisite visa scrutiny that is engaged when someone wishes to travel into this country.

Madam Speaker, the Member for Princes Town spoke loudly and a lot—

Hon. Member: Clearly. A lot.

Sen. The Hon. R. Armour SC:—but he is essentially fundamentally misinformed about that which he spoke so much about, and that is to allow himself to remark that the Prime Minister of this country who has quasi-responsibility, who has responsibility in the quasi portfolio for security in Caricom, is not doing anything about Haiti from a security point of view. And it is interesting when we look at a media statement which was issued on behalf of the Government, on the 3rd of August, 2023, what that media statement said:

“‘The Government of Trinidad and Tobago welcomes Kenya’s decision to commit 1000 police officers to support the Haitian National Police, and Kenya’s willingness to consider assuming leadership of a Multi-National Force, at the request of Haiti, for the purpose of providing assistance in alleviating the security crisis in the Haitian nation.

In the interest of the people of Haiti, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) established the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) and mandated it to facilitate dialogue and consensus-building among Haitian stakeholders with the aim of resolving the political impasse. Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to this process.”

And the point is that, that Eminent Persons Group is a group of former Prime Ministers put together by, through the resourcefulness of other current Prime Ministers of Caricom, led in particular by Dr. Rowley with his responsibility for
security within the Caricom quasi-Cabinet, and that Eminent Persons Group consists of Dr. Kenny Anthony of St. Lucia and two former Prime Ministers, one of Jamaica and one of the Bahamas, and they are, as we speak, working with the people of Haiti to help stakeholders, Haitian stakeholders resolve their political impasse.

It is a delicate, careful process that has to be engaged in with resolve, with will, and quietly; not to be shouted for sound bite purposes from rooftops and empty barrels.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Sen. The Hon. R. Armour SC: And if I may say lastly, the suggestion that the Government, the Attorney General’s Ministry is doing nothing, notwithstanding having asked this House to pass the last resolution, and notwithstanding coming to the House today to ask this House to pass this Resolution, the fact is that there are processes that have been drafted—court processes that have been drafted that rely on this Resolution being passed so that when the applications are made to the court, this Resolution will be referenced in those court applications. And I am not about to say in relation to whom because I do not want to alert those persons in relation to whom those applications will be made when the court process is filed.

So, Madam Speaker, without belabouring this point, I ask that this House pass the Resolution before you, and I beg to move. Thank you.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved:

That the Order shall remain in force until such time as it is revoked.

UNREVISED
ADJOURNMENT

Madam Speaker: Leader of the House.

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Madam Speaker, I apologize for that slight delay.

Hon. Member: Slight?

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Slight. Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn sine die.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, there are two matters that qualified to be raised on the Motion for the adjournment of this House. I have been advised that only one matter is being proceeded with today. Whip, you confirmed that, so that, that being the case, I now call on the Member for St. Augustine.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

St. Augustine Constituency
(Praedial Larceny)

Ms. Khadijah Ameen (St. Augustine): Madam Speaker, I want to thank you and this Parliament for giving me the opportunity to raise a matter that is very critical to the people of St. Augustine constituency, and that is the failure of the Government to deal with the impact of praedial larceny on the farmers in the St. Augustine constituency. Now, Madam Speaker, let me share with you that St. Augustine constituency contributes tremendously to the food basket of Trinidad and Tobago in a meaningful way.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Mr. Indarsingh: “They doh know dat.”

Ms. K. Ameen: Between the Churchill Roosevelt Highway and the northern bank of the Caroni River, from the intersection at the Uriah Butler Highway in the west to the Mausica Road in the east, that is St. Augustine constituency. That is the southern half of St. Augustine constituency. And it includes the areas such as
Bamboo Settlement, Valsayn South, the St. Augustine south area, the Pasea Extension, Macoya extension. We have the Orange Grove Estate. You have the Oropune and Piarco farmers. You have Maloney south estate as well. Included in that area, Madam Speaker, is the 200-acre Agricultural Innovation Park at Orange Grove Estate which is part of the University of the West Indies.

In St. Augustine you also have the Norris Deonarine Wholesale Market at Macoya.

I share this with you to give you a backdrop into the vastness of the agriculture in terms of farmers, in terms of agricultural lands, as well as innovation and wholesale and markets. Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries on its website boasts:

“We champion the conservation of biodiversity…sustainable development of food and non-food systems, supported by sound public policy.”

They boast about “Animal and livestock management” and “Sustainable agriculture”, and today they continue to fail on one of the most pressing issues affecting farmers throughout the country, which is praedial larceny.

Madam Speaker, in the budget debate in the Senate on Thursday, October the 13th, the hon. Minister, Kazim Hosein, who is Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, acknowledged that the praedial larceny issue is a big issue. In fact, he said, and I want to quote from the *Hansard*:

“Also, a big issue was the Praedial Larceny Squad. I asked for more money and we got…”—more—“…money because we want to deal with the Praedial Larceny Squad…”

Madam Speaker, I, as a representative of the farmers and the people of St. Augustine, have not seen this Government make any difference in dealing with praedial larceny.

3.55 p.m.
What we also had in that debate was a promise by that hon. Minister that they were going to have a whole-of-government approach. You know, that is—it is such a nice phrase. He spoke about having the TTPS and municipal police involved with the Praedial Larceny Squad. He spoke about consulting with the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government. He spoke about engaging the Minister of National Security and that there would be a combined effort to get involved in the community and really, in my view, to make up for the shortfall that he is acknowledging that is taking place in that Praedial Larceny Squad. Because it is very clear that that Praedial Larceny Squad does not have the manpower; does not have the equipment and resources and accommodation and training required to meet the demand. And so, it is really a patchwork approach that was explored or indicated in that debate in October of 2022 in the Senate.

Interestingly, the Minister in the Ministry of the Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, the hon. Minister Singh, also spoke about praedial larceny and he said that he was not going to sugar-coat it and he accepted that praedial larceny is an issue in this country. And he spoke about—that “the Government is going to act, the Government is going to act.” We are still waiting for action.

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

**Ms. K. Ameen:** Madam Speaker, the Minister in the Ministry indicated, and I quote:

“And, Madam President, as reflected in the budget, Minister Hosein acted with urgency and we have received an allocation of over $9 million to assist us in the apparatus of fighting praedial larceny...”

Nine million dollars. We are close to making one year since this utterance, and I want to tell you that in St. Augustine South, the situation is getting worse and worse.
We are in a situation where, when thieves go into the garden and reap the crops of the farmers, steal their goods, the first they often do is call the police. The TTPS often does not respond to their calls because they say it is not really their area and very often they genuinely do not have the resources. That in itself is another issue. The farmers have been trying to set up their own way of their securing their communities, their gardens.

We have farmers who have installed CCTV cameras. Many of those agricultural areas understandably do not have electricity, “dey doh have lines”. So they are using solar power, they are using diesel-powered generators to feed these CCTV cameras in an effort to get footage to provide to the authorities to capture the thieves. But when you go to the police station, you go to St. Joseph or Tunapuna police, you do not get the response that is required. Farmers cannot put their lives at risk to go and stay in the garden or try to confront these thieves because they are often armed with guns and cutlasses. It is a dangerous situation. They come and they reap and harvest the crops. They steal animals. They also steal the chemicals and their little equipment, spray cans, and so on. They steal the equipment.

4.00 p.m.

So while we can acknowledge farmers are hardworking, I am seeing the farmers of St. Augustine being deprived of the produce of the land. I am seeing in addition to all the other challenges that they face from this Government including not having land tenure, flooding non-stop, we have this situation of praedial larceny. And I am begging, I am pleading with this Government to deal with praedial larceny in a serious way, make good on your promises to have the TTPS and the municipal police. I am willing as a representative to facilitate meetings with the farmers. So if we have to put our own neighbourhood watch-type structure in place to supplement the shortfalls of the Government, the TTPS and the Praedial Larceny
Squad we will do that, but the Government has a responsibility and you have indeed failed to deal with the impact of praedial larceny on the farmers in the constituency of St. Augustine. I thank you.

**Hon. Members:** *Desk thumping*

**Madam Speaker:** I will now call upon the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries.

**Hon. Members:** *Desk thumping*

**The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries let me indicate, first of all, that the Minister did give that undertaking that there would be that approach being used by involving the TTPS, the Ministry Rural Development and Local Government and the other stakeholders in this kind of response to praedial larceny. Madam Speaker, this is a situation that has plagued many farmers and we understand the angst that the farmers feel when they have put in so much work and then somebody just comes—

**Hon. Member:** The UNC.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:**—and takes their goods. And, Madam Speaker, it is not a new situation but it is a situation that has reached a point where a number of farmers do have some concerns.

Madam Speaker, we are of the firm view that the collaboration that has been established between the Praedial Larceny Squad of the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries and the Praedial Larceny Squad of the TTPS is making a difference and making a major difference. I am sure, Madam Speaker, you would have noticed that there have been a number of positive outcomes from the collaboration. One of the things that we had determined that was necessary was
that it was critical to manage the investment in the agricultural sector and the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries is working assiduously to address the impacts of praedial larceny on our farmers by increasing the contingent of the Praedial Larceny Squad.

We have also procured several vehicles and these vehicles are equipped with GPS capabilities to enhance their fleet and to ensure that collaboration between the TTPS and the Trinidad and Tobago municipal police service.

Madam Speaker, in all 14 corporations we have given the undertaking and we have moved to increase the number of municipal police by 100 in each corporation and by 200 in the Port of Spain City Corporation.

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

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** And, Madam Speaker, in spite of the small number of the Praedial Larceny Squad in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries there has been a 42 per cent detection rate increase in praedial larceny and this has resulted in convictions.

Madam Speaker, in fiscal 2022 alone, the Praedial Larceny Squad conducted 1,156 patrols and visited over 16,185 farms. Of the 199 reports received, 125 offences were recorded and were taken to the court. And in May 2023, the squad was very successful in dealing with the theft of cattle from the central area and also in other areas of the country.

**Hon. Members:** [Interruption]

**Mr. Young:** When you were speaking, nobody interrupted you, you know. Just hush.

**Madam Speaker:** Members, I know we are anticipating certain things at the end of today, but let us reach to the end of today by observing the rules. Okay? Member for Arouca/Maloney, please continue.
Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Now, Madam Speaker, in addition to what has been taking place, we are in process of employing additional officers in the Praedial Larceny Squad and we have found these officers to be very dedicated and we have done a significant amount of training of these officers, the new officers and the additional officers who have come on board.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: In July, Madam Speaker, we added to the level of officers by bringing on constables and higher level officers to the Praedial Larceny Squad so that we are increasing the level of knowledge in the Praedial Larceny Squad.

Madam Speaker, it should be noted that the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries has worked with the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government and, as I said before, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. And the Government does, in fact, recognize the appeals of our farmers and assures that all the necessary action that is the necessary to deal with this issue is being put in place for the protection of the farmers and the protection of their food crops. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Members: [Desk thumping]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 4.06 p.m.
WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

The following question was asked by Mr. Barry Padarath (Princes Town) earlier in the proceedings:

Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (Details of)

162. Mr. Barry Padarath (Princes Town) asked the hon. Minister of Public Utilities:

Will the Minister provide a detailed breakdown of the following:

a) the amount owed by each State entity to the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC);

b) the total debt repaid to T&TEC, by each State entity to date; and

c) the measures that will be implemented by the authorities to avoid any future accumulation of debt to T&TEC by State entities?

The following reply was circulated to Members of the House:

The Minister of Public Utilities (Hon. Marvin Gonzales): Madam Speaker, the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) has advised that:

- The total indebtedness of State entities to the Commission as at May 31, 2023, was $1,473,958,560.19. as detailed in Appendix 1;

- The total debt repaid to T&TEC by State entities over the period January 3rd 2023 to June 5th 2023 was $263,794,822.09 as detailed in Appendix 2.

- The Commission has a Debt Collection Policy, the goal of which is to decrease the volume and amount of receivables and increase the rate of collection. The policy provides for aggressive follow-up on all accounts in arrears and establishes a clearly defined process for collecting past due
accounts, beginning when an account first becomes delinquent and continuing until the debt is collected.

- Specifically with respect to the Public Sector, the following are the key measures undertaken to reduce the debt owed:
  - Every Public Sector agency with significant arrears is written to and advised of the amount owed on their light and power accounts;
  - Meetings are arranged with the General Manager, the Chief Operations Officer and/or the Commercial Manager T&TEC and the very large Public debtors to secure payment or arrive at a payment plan;

Additionally Madam Speaker, there is collaboration between the Permanent Secretaries in the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Public Utilities to ensure that adequate budgetary arrangements are made for treating with such expenditures.

Madam Speaker, there will be an intensification of these measures going forward.
## Appendix 1

### Indebtedness by State Entities to TTEC as at May 31, 2023

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<th>ENTITY</th>
<th>ARREARS</th>
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<td>WATER AND SEWERAGE AUTHORITY</td>
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<td>PETROTRIN</td>
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### Appendix 2

**Payments by State Agencies to TTEC Over the period January 03 2023 to June 05, 2023**

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<td>MAYARO/RIO CLARO REGIONAL CORPORATION</td>
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<td>THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES OPEN CAMPUS</td>
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<td>METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES</td>
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**TOTAL GOVERNMENT PAYMENTS** 263,794,822.09
The following questions were asked by Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche East) earlier in the proceedings:

Prime Minister’s Trip to Barbados
(Details of)

186. Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche East) asked the hon. Prime Minister:

Will the Prime Minister state:

a) the names of all officials including staff and security who accompanied the Prime Minister on his recent trip to Barbados during the period May 5 to 8, 2023;

b) the cost of the overseas travel inclusive of hotel accommodation, meals, ground transport for the Prime Minister and any other officials listed at (a); and

c) any other related costs incurred by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago?

The following reply was circulated to Members of the House:

The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): a) The Prime Minister travelled to Barbados for the period May 05 to May 08, 2023, on personal business. His security detail consisted of one officer, Sergeant Julius Francois;

b) The cost associated with the travel of Sergeant Francois was $40,571.00; and

c) No other additional cost was incurred by the government of Trinidad and Tobago

Prime Minister’s Recent Trip to Washington DC, United States
(Details of)

187. Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche East) asked the hon. Prime Minister:

Will the Prime Minister state:

a) the names of the Ministers, all officials including staff and security who accompanied the Prime Minister on his recent trip or
paricipated in meeting, functions and events along with the Prime Minister to Washington DC, United States of America during the period May 11 to 17, 2023;
b) the cost of the overseas travel inclusive of hotel accommodation, meals, ground transport for the Prime Minister and any other officials listed at (a); and c) any other related costs incurred by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago?

The following reply was circulated to Members of the House:

The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley): (a) The persons who accompanied the Prime Minister on his trip to the United States of America for the period May 11, 2023, to May 17, 2023, are as follows:

i) Mrs. Sharon Clark-Rowley

ii) The Honourable Stuart Young – Minister of Energy and Energy Industries Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister;

iii) Mr. Kirk Francois – International Relations and Protocol Officer;

iv) Ms. Abby Braithwaite – Deputy Press Secretary;

v) Sgt Carl Patrice- Special Branch Officer

vi) Corporal Randall Rodney – Special Branch Officer

(b) The actual expenditure incurred in association with the official travel for the delegation was TT $444,757.73; and

(c) An additional cost of flight insurance in the sum of $2,384.26 was paid in relation to the delegation

The following question was asked by Mr. Rodney Charles (Naparima) earlier in the proceedings:

Road Works in Barrackpore
(Commencement of)
188. **Mr. Rodney Charles** (*Member for Naparima*) to the Minister of Works and Transport:

Will the Minister inform the House when remedial works will commence at Rees Road and any other roads in Barrackpore?

*The following reply was circulated to Members of the House:*

**The Minister of Works and Transport (Sen. The Hon. Rohan Sinanan):** The condition of the roadway of Rees Road, which is 0.415 in length, can be classified as fair according to the Road Condition Survey 2021. There are a few depressed areas with alligator cracking due to the age of the roadway, as well as areas of localized potholes and WASA defects which have deteriorated since then. These have negatively affecting the overall condition of the roadway. Given the number of landslips to be addressed in the Barrackpore area, such as along Papourie Road and Penal Rock Road, and to maintain connectivity, in-house and contracted works have been prioritized accordingly. This includes crack sealing and filling of depressed areas near landslide sites with milling material and asphaltic overlay.

The District conducts periodic and temporary patching works along the various roadways utilizing in-house resources once base or milling material is available. In-house patching works utilizing base material were conducted over the period June 20th to 22nd, 2023. This was an interim measure to fill the larger depressions until the more significant works could be executed. However, due to protest action by residents, the works were delayed. A contracted project for Sectional Strengthening and Rehabilitation along Rees Road has already been initiated and is currently in the Standstill Period as per new procedures set out by the Office of Procurement Regulation. This project will allow for a combination of road rehabilitation, roadside drainage works and sidewalk repairs along Rees Road. A contract is expected to be awarded by 18th September 2023. Other roads in the
surrounding areas will be addressed through patching works via a combination of in-house and contracted services