

**SENATE**

*Tuesday, March 10, 2026*

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**



[MR. PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. President:** Hon. Senators, I have granted leave of absence to Sen. The Hon. Dr. Kennedy Swaratsingh, Sen. Dr. Natalie Chaitan-Maharaj, Sen. Melanie Roberts-Radgman, Sen. Foster Cummings and Sen. Dr. Marlene Attzs, all of whom are out of the country, and Sen. Sophia Chote SC, who is ill.

**SENATORS' APPOINTMENT**

**Mr. President:** Hon. Senators, I have received correspondence from Her Excellency the President, Christine Carla Kangaloo, O.R.T.T., advising of the following temporary appointments in accordance with section 44 of the Constitution:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By Her Excellency CHRISTINE CARLA  
KANGALOO, O.R.T.T., President of the  
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and  
Commander-in-Chief of the Armed  
Forces.

/s/Christine Carla Kangaloo

President.

TO: MR. ASHWORTH JACK

**UNREVISED**

WHEREAS Senator Dr. the Honourable Kennedy Swaratsingh is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago;

NOW THEREFORE, I, CHRISTINE CARLA KANGALOO, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 (1)(a) and section 44 (4)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, do hereby appoint you, ASHWORTH JACK, to be a member of the Senate temporarily, with effect from 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2026, and continuing during the absence of Senator the Honourable Dr Kennedy Swaratsingh from Trinidad and Tobago.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 10<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2026."

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By Her Excellency CHRISTINE CARLA  
KANGALOO, O.R.T.T., President of the  
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and  
Commander-in-Chief of the Armed  
Forces.

/s/Christine Carla Kangaloo

President.

TO: MR. ANDREW RAMSUBEIK

WHEREAS Senator Dr. Chaitan is incapable of performing her duties as a Senator by reason of her absence from Trinidad and Tobago;

**UNREVISED**

NOW THEREFORE, I, CHRISTINE CARLA KANGALOO, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 (1)(a) and section 44 (4)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister, do hereby appoint you, ANDREW RAMSUBEIK, to be a member of the Senate temporarily, with effect from 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2026, and continuing during the absence of Senator Dr. Natalie Chaitan from Trinidad and Tobago..

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 6<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2026.”

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By Her Excellency CHRISTINE CARLA KANGALOO, O.R.T.T., President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

/s/Christine Carla Kangaloo

President.

TO: MS. KARMARIA LONDON

WHEREAS Senator Melanie Roberts-Radgman is incapable of performing her duties as a Senator by reason of her absence from Trinidad and Tobago;

NOW THEREFORE, I, CHRISTINE CARLA KANGALOO, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 (1)(a) and section 44

(4)(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, acting in accordance with the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, do hereby appoint you, KARMARIA LONDON to be a member of the Senate temporarily, with effect from 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2026, and continuing during the absence of Senator Melanie Roberts-Radgman from Trinidad and Tobago.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 10<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2026."

**“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

By Her Excellency CHRISTINE CARLA KANGALOO, O.R.T.T., President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

/s/Christine Carla Kangaloo

President.

**TO: MR. PATRICK PHILLIPS**

WHEREAS Senator Foster Cummings is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago;

NOW THEREFORE, I, CHRISTINE CARLA KANGALOO, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 (1)(a) and section 44 (4)(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, acting in accordance with the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, do hereby appoint you,

**UNREVISED**

PATRICK PHILLIPS to be a member of the Senate temporarily, with effect from 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2026, and continuing during the absence of Senator Foster Cummings from Trinidad and Tobago.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 10<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2026."

**“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

By Her Excellency CHRISTINE CARLA KANGALOO, O.R.T.T., President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

/s/Christine Carla Kangaloo

President.

TO: MS. ZOLA PHILLIPS

WHEREAS Senator Dr. Marlene Attzs is incapable of performing her duties as a Senator by reason of her absence from Trinidad and Tobago;

NOW THEREFORE, I, CHRISTINE CARLA KANGALOO, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 (1)(a) and section 44 (4)(c) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, ZOLA PHILLIPS, to be a member of the Senate temporarily, with effect from 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2026, and continuing during the absence of Senator Dr. Marlene Attzs from Trinidad and Tobago.

**UNREVISED**

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of the President, St. Ann's, this 6<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2026."

**“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

By Her Excellency CHRISTINE CARLA KANGALOO, O.R.T.T. President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

/s/Christine Carla Kangaloo  
President.

**TO: MR. WESLEY GIBBINGS**

WHEREAS Senator Sophia Chote S.C., is incapable of performing her duties as a Senator by reason of illness;

NOW THEREFORE, I, CHRISTINE CARLA KANGALOO, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44 (1)(b) and section 44 (4)(c) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, WESLEY GIBBINGS, to be a member of the Senate temporarily, with effect from 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2026, and continuing during the absence of Senator Sophia Chote S.C., by reason of illness.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Office of

the President, St. Ann's, this 10<sup>th</sup> day of  
March, 2026.”

### **OATH OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

Andrew Ramsubeik, Karmaria London, Patrick Phillips, Zola Phillips.

### **AFFIRMATION OF ALLEGIANCE**

*Senators Ashworth Jack and Wesley Gibbings took and subscribed the Affirmation of Allegiance as required by law.*

### **PAPERS LAID**

1. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the financial statements of the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for the year ended September 30, 2025. [*Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Sen. The Hon. Darrell Allahar)*]
2. Report on the Operations of the National Insurance Board of Trinidad and Tobago and its Audited Financial Statements for the financial year ended June 30, 2025. [*Sen. The Hon. D. Allahar*]
3. Annual Audited Financial Statements of the National Quarries Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2021. [*Sen. The Hon. D. Allahar*]

### **ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

**Mr. President:** Leader of Government Business.

**Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Sen. The Hon. Darrell Allahar):**

Mr. President, there are several questions on the Order Paper. We are prepared to answer the following: Question Nos. 37, 46, and 48. And, Mr. President, in accordance with Standing Order 27(14), we wish to request that the following

questions be deferred for a period of 14 days with Question Nos. 42, 43, 44, 45 and 47.

### **ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**

*The following questions stood on the Order Paper:*

#### **Escalated Socio-Political Pressure in Venezuela**

**(Details of)42.** Given escalated socio-political pressure in Venezuela, can the hon. Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs advise:

- (i) whether the Government has assessed the potential implications of heightened regional tensions for regional stability, including energy security, maritime safety and population movement; and
- (ii) what steps, if any, have been taken within CARICOM or other regional fora to promote consultation or coordinated regional engagement on this matter? [*Sen. A. Vieira SC*]

#### **Government's Support for Diplomatic Engagement (Resolving Regional Tensions)**

**43.** Can the hon. Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs reaffirm:

- (i) that the Government maintains an independent foreign policy where the interests of major powers may intersect with regional peace and economic stability; and
- (ii) that the Government supports diplomatic engagement and negotiated solutions as a preferred means of resolving regional tensions? [*Sen. A. Vieira SC*]

#### **Narco-Terrorism in Relation to Venezuela (T&T's Involvement in Actions to Target)**

**44.** Will the hon. Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs commit to laying a statement in Parliament outlining the nature and scope of Trinidad and

Tobago's involvement in any actions spearheaded by the US to target narco-terrorism in relation to Venezuela? [*Sen. A. Vieira SC*]

**Economic and Fiscal Transparency Standards  
(Government's Commitment to)**

**45.** Can the hon. Minister of Finance advise the Senate whether the Government is committed to meeting economic and fiscal transparency standards, such as IMF's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS), Open Budget Survey standards, PEFA (Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability) framework or any other? [*Sen. V. Dhanpaul*]

**State of Emergency  
(Details of)**

**47.** With regard to the State of Emergency (SOE), which was declared on July 18, 2025 and which ended on January 31, 2026, can the hon. Minister of Homeland Security inform this Senate of:

- (i) the total number of arrests made;
- (i) the number of Preventive Detention Orders (PDOs) issued;
- (ii) the current status of persons detained under PDOs;
- (iii) and the conviction rates for those arrested during the SoE? [*Sen. V. Dhanpaul*]

*Questions, by leave, deferred.*

**1.45p.m.**

**Mr. President:** Yes, leave granted. No question? I think there is a question. Yes?

*The following question stood on the Order Paper in the name of Sen. Melanie Roberts-Radgman:*

**Use of Private CCTV Footage  
(PCA's Policy on)**

**37.** Can the hon. Minister of Justice indicate the Police Complaints Authority's position and/or policy on the use and review of private CCTV footage in investigations into police conduct?

*Question, by leave, deferred.*

**Sen. Dr. Browne:** May I give an indication? Mr. President, with respect to question No. 37, I wish to request that this question be postponed to the next Sitting in the absence from Trinidad and Tobago, of Sen. Melanie Roberts-Radgman. Thank you, Mr. President.

**Mr. President:** Okay, the question is deferred. Sen. Vishnu Dhanpaul.

**Medium-Term Fiscal Framework (MTFF)  
(Parliamentary Presentation)**

**46. Sen. Vishnu Dhanpaul** asked the hon. Minister of Finance:

Can the Minister inform the Senate on whether:

- (i) the Government has a Medium-Term Fiscal Framework (MTFF) covering 2026-2030; and
- (ii) if so, when will this framework be tabled in Parliament?

**Mr. President:** The Leader of Government Business.

**The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Sen. The Hon. Darrell Allahar):** Mr. President, I am authorized to answer this question on behalf of the Minister of Finance. As to whether the Government has a medium-term fiscal framework for 2026 to 2030, Mr. President, when we formed the Government in May 2025, there was no medium-term fiscal framework (MTFF), as we say, document that had been prepared and disseminated. Nevertheless, in the absence of such a document, this has not prevented this Government from engaging in fiscal planning for the medium term. In fact, Mr. President, although the previous Government did indicate in their 2022 Budget Statement their fiscal plans for the next three years, 2022 to 2024, no such medium-term fiscal framework was

presented in their 2025 Budget Statement.

In April of 2029, Mr. President, when those on the opposite side were in Government, the International Monetary Fund published a technical assistance report entitled, and I quote—

**Hon. Senators:** [*Crosstalk*]

**Sen. The Hon. D. Allahar:** I am hearing some babbling on the other side. 2019, when you were in government. Yes, I think you heard wrongly.

**Sen. Al-Rawi SC:** You said 29.

**Sen. The Hon. D. Allahar:** 20—I am sorry, 2019. It is just my bad handwriting. The IMF published a technical assistance report entitled, and I quote—no, not his handwriting, mine—*Trinidad and Tobago Developing a Medium-term Fiscal Framework*, which defined the medium-term fiscal framework as, and I quote:

A mechanism for setting multi-year fiscal objectives through which strategic decisions are taken regarding the main fiscal aggregates, i.e. balance, debt, revenue, and expenditure ahead of the annual budget process. MTFFs, which are the medium-term fiscal frameworks, are typically associated with the objectives of fiscal sustainability and macroeconomic stability.

“One key output from the MTFF is an aggregate expenditure ceiling, which is to be observed in budget formulation, approval and execution.”

That was the IMF’s quote, Mr. President.

The report set out a sequence reform agenda comprising five main recommendations, that is that report, to support the development and implementation of an MTFF, and those recommendations were designed at the time to strengthen fiscal sustainability by shifting fiscal policy away from an annual incremental approach towards a structured medium-term decision-making framework, beginning with the 2020 budget.

There were three main recommendations to be implemented ahead of the 2020 budget, and two main recommendations identified for implementation after the 2020 budget. The recommendations, Mr. President, to be implemented before the 2020 budget were as follows:

1. Seek Cabinet's approval to develop the proposed medium-term fiscal framework and begin to introduce its first elements ahead of the 2020 budget.
2. Update the budget process to incorporate the medium-term fiscal framework; and
3. Seek Cabinet's approval of the fiscal strategy, preliminary projections, and expenditure ceiling early in the budget cycle.

And the recommendations, Mr. President, for implementation after the 2020 budget were as follows:

1. Revise the 2021 budget documentation to incorporate the medium-term fiscal framework; and
2. To consider progressing other more complex reforms after budget 2020.

Mr. President, the intention behind these recommendations was to guide the Ministry of Finance in its ongoing reforms, which would incorporate a medium-term perspective in its fiscal planning and to establish foundations for medium-term fiscal framework.

Mr. President, most of the IMF's recommendations in this regard were never fully implemented by the previous administration, with the main exception being the restructuring of the Economic Management Division (EMD), which is still ongoing. This division, this EMD, was assigned the responsibility, Mr. President, for developing a medium-term fiscal framework to help establish macroeconomic parameters for the national budget.

During the period 2019 to 2025, up to the time the previous government demitted office, none of the major recommendations had been fully implemented. Mr. President, some examples of supporting recommendations that were not implemented include:

1. Cabinet Note on broad medium-term fiscal framework design and key changes to budget process for 2020.
2. Establishing a macro fiscal forecasting committee and to agree on the terms of reference.
3. To circulate economic assumptions to Ministries and agencies.
4. To prepare fiscal aggregates table for budget documents.
5. To prepare key macroeconomic—

**Mr. President:** Five minutes.

**Sen. The Hon. D. Allahar:** I am sorry.

**Mr. President:** Five minutes.

**Sen. The Hon. D. Allahar:** Five minutes. Very well, Mr. President.

**Mr. President:** Sen. Vishnu Dhanpaul?

**Sen. Dhanpaul:** Thank you very much, Minister, and is it possible to circulate the rest of your response in writing? Thank you very much, Mr. President.

Minister, given that a medium-term fiscal framework does not exist, can you indicate what interim fiscal planning instruments are being used to guide medium-term expenditure and debt management?

**Sen. The Hon. D. Allahar:** Mr. President, the Ministry, that is the Ministry of Finance, currently produces a three-year medium-term fiscal estimates and forecast, as you know. At present, these would cover the period 2026 to 2028, which represents the Estimates for the current year, plus forecast for the next two years. These are internal Estimates. The Estimates are produced by the Budget

Division, which has responsibility for preparation of the annual budget and which is formally reviewed and revised at the mid-year review.

However, in the event of material developments that impact the fiscal accounts, the EMD prepares an updated projection to reflect the fiscal position. The next cycle of the Ministry's medium-term fiscal estimates and forecasts will cover the period 2027 to 2029. The year 2030 would therefore be included in the medium-term cycle relating to 2028 to 2030 period.

And to be more specific to answer, the development of a comprehensive MTFE is currently underway as part of the Ministry's broader macro fiscal strengthening efforts. And the Ministry has already taken several steps, including enhancing the macro fiscal forecasting function within the EMD, preparing multi-year projections that underpin annual budgets as an ongoing exercise, strengthening linkages between fiscal real sector and financing assumptions, and improving internal processes for medium-term expenditure planning.

And Mr. President, I have been authorized to say that the framework will be tabled in Parliament once it has reached the necessary level of methodological robustness and institutional maturity.

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

**Mr. President:** Do you have any other, Sen. Vishnu Dhanpaul? Or, you are through. Sen. Etienne.

### **Land for the Landless Programme (Eligibility and Inclusion)**

**48. Sen. Alicia Lalite-Etienne** to the Minister of Land and Legal Affairs:

In light of the January 2026 launch of the rebranded "Land for the Landless Programme", can the Minister state:

- (i) whether the programme makes specific provision for persons with disabilities; and

- (ii) the eligibility requirements to qualify for land allocation under the programme?

**The Minister of Land and Legal Affairs (Hon. Saddam Hosein):** Thank you very much, Mr. President, and I would like to thank Senator Lalite-Etienne for the question. The question asks, Mr. President, whether the Land for the Landless Programme makes specific provision for persons with disability. The simple answer to that question, Mr. President, is yes.

The rebranded Land for the Landless Programme makes specific provision for differently-abled persons. First, we start with the application process. The application forms promote inclusivity through a user-friendly online platform while also facilitating in-person assistance for those who may require support allow applicants to indicate whether they are or any member of their household is differently-abled, and we have five ICT centres in Arima; Lisas Garden; in St. Joseph; in Tarodale, and in Mayaro to assist applicants.

The second is, Mr. President, the programme utilizes a structured point-based evaluation system incorporating social vulnerability indicators. These indicators ensure that households experiencing heightened socio-economic challenges, including those with differently-abled members, are assessed with appropriate weight and consideration, and based on our policy, Mr. President, we cover oral disability, visual disability, severe non-ambulatory, mental or cognitive disability, mid-moderate, semi-ambulant, and mild ambulant categories, Mr. President, and applicants who attain the highest rankings under this evaluation framework, that is, those identified as most vulnerable, based on the established indicators, are prioritized for the allocation of approved residential lots.

While other factors must also be assessed, including the applicant's financial capacity to purchase the residential lot at a subsidized rate, it remains clear the

intention of the programme is to prioritize and target households facing significant socio-economic challenges, including those with differently-abled persons.

The second part of the question asks, Mr. President, the eligibility criteria. It must be met by all applicants under the Land for the Landless Programme. The applicants must be 18 years or older, be a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, not be the owner, part owner of property or land in Trinidad and Tobago, and the combined monthly income of the applicant and co-applicant, where applicable, must not exceed \$30,000 per month. I think persons were getting a bit confused in the public. It is not that you have to have a salary of \$30,000. Your salary must be under \$30,000 combined, or if it is a single applicant, and the person must not be the recipient of any Government or State housing subsidy.

We have three categories, Mr. President. We have general land for the landless for all citizens to apply. We have specific categories for employees of the State, Mr. President, and those persons must be employees of the State for a minimum of five years at the time of the application.

And the third, which I am very proud of, Mr. President, recent graduates from tertiary educational institutions.

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

**Hon. S. Hosein:** So, Mr. President, when UNC wins, everybody wins. I thank you very much.

**Mr. President:** Sen. Lalite-Etienne, do you have any supplementary?

**Sen. Lalite-Etienne:** No, Mr. President.

**Mr. President:** Thank you.

### **LAW REVISION (AMDT.) BILL, 2026**

Bill to amend the Law Revision Act, Chap. 3:03 [*The Attorney General*]; read the first time.

*Motion made:* That the next stage be taken at a later stage of the proceedings.

[*Hon. S. Hosein*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**2.00p.m.**

**LAW REVISION (AMDT.) BILL, 2026**

**Mr. President:** The hon. Minister of Land and Legal Affairs.

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

**The Minister of Land and Legal Affairs and Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (Hon. Saddam Hosein):** Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, I beg to move:

That a Bill to amend the Law Revision Act Chap. 3:03, be now read a second time.

Mr. President, it is a pleasure to always join my honourable colleagues in this House. I have been told that every time I come here, I come with good news. I come again, with very good news for this House, and the country as a whole.

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

**Hon. S. Hosein:** Mr. President, on this very auspicious occasion of Ramadan, I also want to take the opportunity to wish my Muslim brothers and sisters, both locally, regionally, and internationally, Ramadan Mubarak.

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

**Hon. S. Hosein:** Mr. President, what we are doing here today is a very simple exercise, no rocket science, a simple practical exercise, which I do not think will meet any opposition. We are just going to make the laws of Trinidad and Tobago are made available online as official versions of the law. Mr. President, I could say that, and take my seat, and I know I can get the support of this House.

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

**Hon. S. Hosein:** Currently, all of us, Mr. President, we go online and we download the versions of the law that are available online. But, Mr. President, they are not the official versions of the law, and I sought the leave of the Chair, before I could do this in terms of displaying. These are the official versions of the law. [*Member displays law book*] It must be in a written format, printed, bound, and placed in these binders. These are the official versions of the law.

Everyone has a smartphone, which is probably one quarter of the size of this, and it is extremely lighter than this. So what we are doing, Mr. President, is taking a progressive step by encouraging persons to now go paperless-based. We are moving away from the paper-based environment into an electronic digital environment. So these very critical, but simple amendments, Mr. President, would fundamentally impact our justice system. At the core of this Bill is the principle that every citizen has the right to free access to the legal information that governs them.

This Bill will establish electronic versions of the revised laws of Trinidad and Tobago in the Digital Legislative Library as official, authoritative, and secure versions of the law. The laws of Trinidad and Tobago are found in principal Acts, and a myriad of amending Acts. As we see it here, Mr. President, you have one miscellaneous Bill that amends another miscellaneous Bill, and then we have to cross reference two miscellaneous Bills with the parent Act, and sometimes most of us in here do not have the most up-to-date version of the law.

So, when this law comes into force, Mr. President, it will make the jobs of the parliamentarians, the lawmakers of Trinidad and Tobago, your job become easier. We are making it easier so that there will be less room for any error, Mr. President. Because, the task of unweaving and weaving all of these amendments as part of the revised editions of the law and the supplements to the revised

editions, is the responsibility of the Law Revision Commission established under the Act.

Under the Law Revision Act, the Law Revision Commission's mandate is to prepare, publish, and maintain a revised edition of the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. These printed volumes—published in multiple volumes and updated by hand—have long served as authoritative references for our legislation. They remain an essential part of our legal framework, and have supported the administration of justice for decades. However, we are now in a digital age, and the way citizens, businesses, legal practitioners, courts and public institutions access the law has significantly evolved.

Online platforms provide the average citizen with free access to timely information at their fingertips. Today, the first and often only port of call for anyone seeking to know the law, is the Internet. Some people use ChatGPT. I do not encourage that, Mr. President, but in reality our online legal resources already serve thousands of users each year, including attorneys, judges, students, researchers, parliamentarians, and members of the public.

Mr. President, I mentioned three various elements of the law. You have one, which is the consolidation of the law. Two, you have the revised version or the revised edition of the written law, which is called, “the revision”, and then you have, supplements to the revised edition. What does that mean? On a constant basis, the Parliament sits at the Parliament. They make a new law, which is a new Act of Parliament, or they may amend an existing law, which is an existing Act. So the Law Revision Commission constantly does consolidated versions of the law. But then you have a second thing called “the revised edition of the law”, which under the Law Revision Act is done at a particular date based on an order. So the laws can be revised up to a particular date, and when the laws are revised

until that date, those become the official versions of the law at that date.

So, assuming today being the 10<sup>th</sup> of March, 2026, if we say, today is the revised version of the law, we have consolidated versions of the law up until this date, which are the most up-to-date recent versions of it. Then after that, you will have supplements, because Parliament sits and amends. Then those supplements now have to find themselves over to the revised law. So, you have the revised law at the bottom, and then you put the supplements in, in terms of including the amendments to the revised law. But that is done physically. The same red book—I remember one day during in-service training with the late Ms. Dana Seetahal, she brought boxes, Mr. President, cardboard boxes of paper, and she said, “Your first job is to revise the law”.

So, Mr. President, I was afraid. How are we going to revise the law? You open the boxes, and you find these printed sheets here—[*Minister displays printed sheets*—in clear wrapping, and it gives you instructions. “In Volume I, replace pages three to five with these three leaves.” “In Volume VI, replace pages one to 10 with these leaves.” That is how we are currently revising the laws based on our existing law. Mr. President, that cannot work. Under this progressive UNC Government, we have taken the steps to ensure that we have a digital environment.

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

**Hon. S. Hosein:** Followers, the courts sit online; everyone views the Parliament Channel online. You can find Acts of Parliament on the Parliament website, and you can find Bills on the Parliament website. Why can we not find the official versions of the law online? That is what we are doing here today, Mr. President, very, very simple amendments.

But what it also does, Mr. President, is it saves us some money. Because, I pulled the figures to find out, well what does this cost us? Because these binders

are expensive, the paper is expensive. Mr. President, when I went into the Law Revision Commission, I asked them, I started to enquire about this particular process. We make our laws locally, the Parliament, this is the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, but do you know our laws are printed abroad, Mr. President? Our laws are not printed locally. Our laws are printed abroad. Mr. President, as Minister, I gave a direction to the Law Revision Commission that when we are printing written versions of the law, which will coincide with the online version, ensure that it is printed locally.

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

**Hon. S. Hosein:** The 2006 Revision of the Law, which are the red binders, Mr. President, the year it was printed was in 2007. It cost the country \$13million just to print laws. The first supplement to the 2006 Revised Edition of the Law in 2010 cost us \$2.8million. The second supplement to the 2006 Revised Edition, in 2012 cost us \$3million. The third supplement to the 2006 Revised Edition, which was in 2014 cost us \$1.82 million. The fourth supplement to the 2006 Revised Edition in 2015 cost us \$1.85million, and the fifth supplement to the 2006 Revised Edition, which was printed in 2019 cost us \$1.9 million.

So, Mr. President, this simple amendment could save the taxpayers several millions of dollars. Because, all of the practicing attorneys in this esteemed Chamber, Mr. President, they use these red binders as decoration, you know. It is where lawyers go in front of, take their official picture, and post it online or share it with their friends and family. No one uses these red books, and if anyone disputes it, I would ask them to say so. But, Mr. President, it is a form of decoration in someone's law chamber now. It is not practical now; it is impractical to use.

So, Mr. President, as I said, section 4 of the Act requires:

**UNREVISED**

“The Commission shall prepare, publish and maintain a revised edition of the written laws of Trinidad and Tobago...”

Apart from references to written law in section 4, section 5 of the Act refers to the publication of laws:

“...in loose-leaf form or in such other form as the Commission may determine...”

There is no reference in the existing law to electronic versions of the law in the Act. While the words, “or in such other form” may appear to give the Commission the flexibility to publish electronic versions of the law, as well as printed versions, from a reading of the Act as a whole, Mr. President, and advice received, In section 15, in particular, it is clear that only printed laws are considered to be official and authoritative. Under section 15 of the Act, judicial notice is to be taken from the proper written Statute Book of Trinidad and Tobago. What does that mean, Mr. President? That the courts can only take notice of the written versions of the law, and no other form. So therefore this amendment is necessary to place it in the electronic form.

The Commission also publishes unofficial electronic versions of the law free of charge in its digital database called the Digital Legislative Library, which was established in 2015. The DLL is widely used by legal practitioners, and the general public. However, because of the existing barriers to access, the electronic versions of the law published on the DLL do not have equal legal status with the printed versions, and therefore cannot be relied upon as a definitive statement of the law. In legal proceedings or formal government transactions only the printed version is definitively official. This state of affairs is unsatisfactory as it lags behind the technological reality of the modern world. Every citizen deserves to know that the laws he/she finds online are authentic, accurate and up-to-date. The

amendment in this Bill would therefore guarantee that access.

Mr. President, the Bill would amend the Act essentially to provide free access to legal reliable laws in electronic format on a secure portal, the DLL, thereby removing existing barriers to access. Further, the Bill will give the Minister the power to make regulations prescribing the required technical standards for securing the integrity of the electronic laws.

Mr. President, I will go through the various clauses of the Bill with the Senate. Clause 1 of the Bill provides the short title of the Bill. It is a Bill to amend the Law Revision Act, Chap. 3:03 to expressly provide for the publication of electronic versions of the revised laws on a designated website. The effect of this amendment would be to put the electronic versions of laws on an equal footing as their printed counterparts. Both versions would be official and authoritative.

Clause 2 of the Bill provides that the Act for which the Bill would come into force on a date fixed by the President for Proclamation. That is important because currently we are in the stage of consolidating. Very soon we will be revising the laws. The last revision that would have taken place would have been in 2006 with five supplements thereafter. So very soon, we will be doing a revised version of the law.

Secondly, we are in the process of testing all of the technology, and the various security features, and so on, that will comprise the official laws. You have seen other institutions do it. The Judiciary in particular, there is an E-verified system. So for example, when probates are issued through the Supreme Court there are QR codes, and there are various security features that determine whether or not the document that is presented, is in fact, an authentic document.

**2.15 p.m.**

Clause 3 of the Bill defines the word “Act” and is used in the Bill to mean

the Law Revision Act for the purpose of ease of reference. Clause 4 of the Bill, Mr. President, would amend section 2 of the Act by the definition section by inserting the definitions of the two terms to be introduced into the Act, by the Bill. The term “designated website” would be defined as a:

“...website specified in an Order”—made—“under...”—the new—“section 5A(1);”

—and the acronym “PDF” would be defined as:

“...Portable Document Format;”

Clause 5 of the Bill would amend the Act to provide for the publication of official and authoritative electronic versions of the law. Clause 5 would insert:

“...three new sections...”—into the Act—“...5A, 5B and 5C...”

The proposed new 5A(1) would require:

“...the Minister...”—to make an—“...Order...”—designating—“...an official website for the publication of electronic versions of the Laws.”

The proposed new section 5A(2) would require:

“An electronic version of the Laws...published on the designated website...”—to—“...be in PDF or such other format as the Minister may, by Order, approve.”

The proposed section 5A(3) would require:

“...certain conditions...to be met before an electronic copy or printout of an electronic version of the Laws can be...”—recognized as—“...official.”—and authoritative.

So there would be a presumption that electronic versions of the law that meet those conditions are as official and authoritative as their paper-based counterparts.

The proposed 5A(4) would enable the Minister to make regulations prescribing requirements in any respect of any matter mentioned in paragraph (c)(i)

and (c)(ii) of section 5A(3). This provision would enable the Minister to prescribe technical requirements necessary for securing and authenticating the electronic laws while allowing for some flexibility, as technology is always evolving. The effect of clause 5A is therefore to promote legal certainty as it clearly provides that an electronic version of a revised law that meets the requirements of the Act can be presumed to be authentic, and unless the contrary is shown, be relied upon as secure and authoritative.

The—“...proposed section 5B seeks to provide that where there are discrepancies between the...”—print publication of the revised laws—  
“...and the electronic version...the electronic version shall prevail.”

This provision would take effect on or after the date that these amendments come into effect. This provision is necessary because revisions of the law in an electronic format would be published more frequently than the paper-based version due to the high cost of printing which I explained earlier.

The—“proposed...”—new—“...section 5C would provide that where a change or a correction is made to any...”—electronic version of the revised—“...law already published on the designated website, the Commission shall publish a Notice of such change or correction.”

And the Attorney General often says that the only body other than the Parliament that can amend the law is the Law Revision Commission, but those powers are very much circumscribed within their parent Act in terms of being limited to corrections, omissions, minor amendments, and so on. As it stands, the Act makes provision that section 21 for the correction of error is discovered after the revised laws are printed and published by means of a “Correction Order” or a “Law Revision Order” made by the Commission. So this clause would ensure that errors in electronic versions of the law discovered by publication on the designated

website can be corrected and that users of the website to be made aware of the change.

“Clause 6 of the Bill seeks to amend section 15 of the Act to provide that electronic versions of the Laws published under...”—the proposed—  
“...section 5A...”—are recognized—“...by the Courts.”

Section 15 of the Act provides for the courts to take judicial notice of the proper written Statute Book. This amendment seeks to ensure that electronic versions of the revised law would carry the same weight as a published, printed version. So we take note that the Bill does not do away with paper-based publication; we are limiting it. But it gives digital laws that are verified and authenticated, the full weight of the law, enhancing public trust in our digital democracy.

Mr. President, we are not strangers to this. There are other jurisdictions that have online official versions of their law. Countries like Singapore, Canada, and Australia have updated their laws to make online versions of their law authoritative. So globally, the overarching trend is towards the greater recognition and integration of online legislation within national framework. In Canada, the Legislation Revision and Consolidation Act, 1985, as amended, has allowed for official online versions since 2009 via the Justice Laws Website. Most provinces have adopted similar legislation, including the Ontario Legislation Act, 2006. The Department of Justice regularly updates consolidated laws on the Justice Laws Website, and these online versions are legally authoritative for court purposes.

Section 31(1) of the Legislation Revision and Consolidation Act provides that:

“Every copy of a consolidated statute or consolidated regulation published by the Minister...in either print or electronic form is evidence of that statute or regulation and of its contents and every copy purporting to be published

by the Minister is deemed to be so published, unless the contrary is shown.” In Singapore, the Revised Editions of the Law Act, 1983, as amended by the Electronic Gazette and Legislation Act, No.5 of 2025, gives authoritative status to electronic versions of revised editions and provides that they are to be treated as judicially recognized.

In Australia, Mr. President, the Federal Register for Legislation provides authoritative whole-of-government digital access to Commonwealth laws. Australia’s Electronic Transactions Act, 1999, ensures that electronic communications and documents are as legally as valid as paper-based versions if the electronic copy is accessed at, or downloaded from an approved website in the format prescribed by the rules; and two, either the website or electronic copy indicates in a way prescribed by the rules that such a copy is an authorized version. A printed copy of an electronic version of a revised law or compilation of laws is also recognized as an authorized version of a law if the copy indicates in a way prescribed by the rules that it is an authorized version.

Most Australian territories also have their own official websites providing free access to authorized online legislation, including revised Australian legislation in electronic format. The authority of the electronic laws is established either by the Interpretation Act or other similar legislation. These are the official websites that are the most up-to-date compilations or consolidations of legislation that can be found. Digital revised laws and compilations of laws are considered authoritative if sourced from official government register websites. Electronic versions of laws and compilations are typically provided in PDF format to prevent unauthorized changes and carry a digital signature that identifies them as official.

Mr. President, in conclusion, I strongly urge this House of the importance of these amendments. We are embracing our future towards modernizing our legal

system. Currently, I have asked the Law Revision Commission to provide me with some information with respect to how far along we are with the consolidation for the new revised date. We are past 50 per cent of the Acts to be consolidated and revised, Mr. President, and in very soon order we will see that happening. There are many players involved in the law-making process. It starts with the public, it goes to the Ministry, the Cabinet, the CPC, sometimes the Law Reform Commission, the Office of the Attorney General, the Parliament, the President, and the Government Printery. There are many parts, all have to now move together.

Mr. President, I ask that this honourable House give its full support to these very important, critical, and progressive amendments. I beg to move.

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

*Question proposed*

**Mr. President:** Sen. Al-Rawi SC.

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

**Sen. Faris Al-Rawi SC:** Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I rise today to join in contribution to this debate. I welcome the hon. Minister's piloting. I propose to make a few observations that I hope the hon. Minister will pay attention to in a method to improve what is before us, because there are a few risks that perhaps we need to attend to. I do not think that it would intrude upon the passage of the Bill today, but I make these genuine observations in an attempt to shore up some concerns that I have in relation to the law. The Bill before us, Mr. President, is a Bill to amend the Law Revision Act.

The Law Revision Act is Chap. 3:03 of the Laws of Trinidad and Tobago. It came into effect in 1979. And what it constitutes is the creation in law of the official entity which has the authority to manage the collection of our laws, publish it, have it available to the public, to the House of Representatives, to the Senate, to the

Judiciary, to the Registrar of the Supreme Court, and to keep a copy for itself. So there are six copies that are bound to be created. But when you have it available to the public, it means that there must be wide dissemination. Obviously, you cannot say that you ought to comply with the laws if you do not have knowledge of what the laws are. So the law revision legislation tells us what the official law is, and it tells us where the courts are to find reference to what is the actual law; something called judicial notice.

So the Revised Laws of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago are published in a periodic version of time—five years at a time. We have the ability to publish laws pursuant to an Order, section 8 of the parent Act, but we have the ability to publish laws in special circumstances in section 9 of the parent Act. So if the hon. Minister would take note of sections 8 and 9. I will explain where I am coming to in terms of caution. The law, as it is set up, is one which contemplates a manual, printing, physical version of the law.

Now, I ask you to take note, Mr. President, that for seven years I had command of this particular area of the law. And in getting to the modernization of all things then at the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs, our Government went on a significant mission to digitize Trinidad and Tobago. We pursued that in a digitization of the Judiciary, but very importantly, at the Ministry of Legal Affairs, then a part of the Attorney General's Office, we went into a significant digitization effort at all of the registries: the Land Registry, Companies Registry, and the registry of births and deaths. Such is the case of reform that you can apply for all of these things and comply with the law online, and make payments online.

In fact, Mr. President, in looking at the online versions, I confess that I had a standoff with the persons at the Ministry of Finance as to why we could not do

electronic payments, and it turned out to be the need to have financial instructions under the Exchequer and Audit Act, but we sorted it out. Today represents a continuation of that work. I commend the hon. Minister for taking the baton and running with it. The Office of the Attorney General produced a significant reform of its website under my tenure. And in fact, the Digital Legislative Library of the Attorney General's Office has every single update of the law that we do; every single one.

So it is most current, and every single law is there. But the hon. Minister is correct. We do not have the ability to have judicial notice of these laws because they do not fall within the parameters of the Law Revision Committee in their work in the Law Revision Act. And today, the most important amendment that is being put into the law is the fact that judicial notice will stand in respect of the digital version of the law. And it does so in priority to the printed version of the law, and that, in fact, is anchored in the amendments to section 15, into the new section 5C. That is the insertion caused by clause 5 of the Bill.

**2.30 p.m.**

Now, because the Law Revision Act, is built on the platform of there being pages to be produced from time to time, either to be inserted or to be removed, we have a risk that perhaps we have not gone far enough today to get the real effect. The hon. Minister said something that was very important a while ago, that the consolidated versions of the laws need to be produced, and we will have access to the consolidated versions of the laws; we as a Parliament, we as a public, we as the Judiciary, we as the Houses in sub committees, et cetera. But, Mr. President, there is the risk of *mandamus*, an action at court directing you to do something and if you look to section 10 of the parent law:

“(1) The Commission shall cause a copy of every page authorised to appear the Laws to be delivered as soon as practicable after publication to the Attorney General...Clerk of the House of Representatives...Clerk of the Senate...to the Registrar of the Supreme Court and...Government Archivist.

(2) It shall be the duty of the Commission and each of the officers referred to in subsection (1) to maintain one set of the Laws and punctually to insert pages...and the Commission shall take such further steps as are necessary to ensure that there shall be at all times available to the Courts and to the public sets of the Laws maintained in the manner provided by this subsection.”

So I flag section 10.

If I go—because, the amendment by the insertion of a new 5A, 5B and 5C operates on sections 8, 9 and 10, 21 and 22 of this parent law. If I go to section 8 of the parent Act—and I invite the hon. Minister to pay attention to this. He is referred to it—the hon. Minister in his piloting:

“(1) The Commission may by Order appoint a date to be a revision date for the Laws.”

The hon. Minister gave us that example of date X, after which it is published, and we are due to have a publication at some time going forward, and indeed, there is a significant cost to publication, accepted this is a good mischief for us to solve by these amendments that we make today.

But if you look to section 8(2):

“The Commission shall revise the Laws as soon as practicable after each revision date, that is to say...prepare the necessary pages and make the necessary Orders for the inclusion of...pages...for the removal of pages...”

So, it is only after the Order has said, look, in August 2026, you shall have the revised laws coming into publication, it is after August 2026, that you go and you insert and remove pages, as the learned Minister said.

Now, I actually remember the laws being inserted into the black books long before the red books. So, it is an exercise that has happened from time to time. But my point in relation to section 8 of the parent Act is that it still requires a manual process of the insertion of pages.

When you get to section 9—this is how you go outside the period of five years—it says this:

“(1) In special circumstances, the Commission may by Order appoint a date other than the revision date appointed under section 8 as a special revision date for a particular written law specified in the Order.”

And then you:

“(2)...shall revise...”

Section 10 requires the hard copy insertions, et cetera.

When you get to section 21, there is another very important role:

“(1) Where any error made in the publication...comes to the attention of the Commission, the Commission shall forthwith rectify the error in the manner provided by this section.”

Let me underline that, “this section” only. And:

“(2) The Commission may rectify the error—

(a) By an Order (...a “Correction Order”) making the required amendments to the Laws; and (either alternatively or in addition);

(b) by a Law Revision Order removing, inserting or replacing such pages...”

Section 22:

“(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 6(1), where the Commission thinks it is expedient, in the interest of economy or convenience, in revising any page of the Laws to...an amendment has been made...”

You may:

“(a) allow the page to...”—stay there—“...to continue to form part of the Laws...

(b) include...Laws”—in—“a page...”

Now, why have I gone to sections 8, 9, 10, 21 and 22? Because by inserting sections 5A, B and C, we do not amend sections 8, 9, 10, 21 and 22. So, you will be compelled to make errors in the manual version, even though you have an electronic version, and if somebody is wicked enough but in the right to do so, they could compel you to actually do the physical version, because we are still bound by this law to run now a manual, printed version, alongside an electronic version. Therefore, Mr. President, what is potentially required for the hon. Minister to consider and to perhaps come back to us with at a later date, would be an amendment to section 5 of the parent Act.

Now, the hon. Minister noted the language of section 5 of the existing law when he piloted the Bill. Section 5 says this:

“The Laws shall be published in loose-leaf form or in such other form as the Commission may determine and shall comprise such pages as may be authorised to be included therein under section 6.”

I held the view that the language which says, “or such other form as the Commission may determine” could include electronic versions. I hold that view because of the Electronic Transactions Act, albeit that the Electronic Transactions

Act treats with transactions, it also treats with its objective section, with encouraging the use of data and other mechanisms held by public bodies. The definition of “public bodies” in the Electronic Transactions Act includes the Government, the Parliament, et cetera. It is in the Electronic Transactions Act that you have the ability to store things electronically, particularly insofar as the Electronic Transactions Act binds the State.

Now, I believe that the hon. Minister should consider amending section 5 of the parent law, specifically to include the words, “including by electronic means”. Why? If you amend section 5 of the principal Act to say now, “The Laws shall be published in loose-leaf form or in such other form, including by electronic means”, then you will take care of the problems that we have when you get to sections 8, 9, 10, 21 and 22, where right now you are bound to do the errors by Orders which are physical. Because when you get to what the Bill says, the introduction of the electronic versions in the new sections 5A, 5B and 5C by clause 5, clause 5 says:

“5A(1) The Minister may, by Order, designate a website...”

—this is 5A:

“(2) An electronic version of the Laws that is published...shall be in PDF or such other format as the Minister may, by Order, approve.

(3) An electronic copy or printout shall...be deemed to be official and authoritative if...”—they have certain conditions met.

I am going to come to that for a different purpose in a moment.

“(4) The Minister may make regulations...”

Section 5B, if there is an inconsistency the digital version prevails. Section 5C, you must give digital notification of changes.

But this section is, only when you read it, to publish electronic versions on a website with certain conditions being met. Clause 5 of the Bill does not correct

errors, omissions, insertions and printable versions of the type that sections 8, 9, 21 and 22 dictate. It can be solved very simply by including in the parent law, section 5, the words, “including by electronic means”, which means that the law shall be published, not only in loose-leaf format, but in electronic versions. Because a failure to produce it in printable versions available to the public—which is where it costs millions. The law says, you have to have six copies, but you must have it available to the public. The millions of dollars come in the availability to the public. But if you want to migrate away from the cost of the printable versions, to meet the public, you really have to say that the laws themselves may be published in electronic versions.

Now, Mr. President, if you get to clause 5 of the Bill and you cross-reference now clause 4, clause 4 says, let us put in definitions for “designated website”, no problem, but we are including a definition for “PDF”. Why? Because in clause 5, we are introducing that the requirement is that laws must be in PDF. Now, what is PDF? It is a Portable Document Format. It is a format available regardless of what type of device or software you use or operating system. So, it works for Windows. It works for open-source software. It works for Macintosh users, Apple users.

The problem with the definition of:

“‘PDF’ means ‘Portable Document Format;’”

—is that it is restrictive. Really and truly, hon. Minister, you ought to consider amending the definition to borrow the language of section 5A(2). The definition should really read:

“PDF” means “Portable Document Format” or such other format as the Minister may, by Order, approve.

So that way, it always speaks. Why? Because when you go to the new section 5A(3)(a), one of the conditions for the electronic version of the law to be correct is that it must be:

“(a) accessed or downloaded from the designated website;”

Sure. But it must be:

“(b) it is in PDF...”

Now, with technology constantly training and changing, this becomes a technologically specific term, which tomorrow, may not exist. The problem is the definition section does not continue to speak. It is higher up in the subsection. So, anytime you move away from a PDF format into a different format, it cannot easily be approved by the Minister. The Minister would have to come and amend the new section 5A to change PDF to be, or such other format as the section dictates. The simple fix to that, look at the definition section, amend PDF, and you can find comfort because if you look at the “designated website” that is used in the definition, you will see it has the same formula.

“‘designated website’ means the website specified in an Order under section 5A(1);”

So, there really would be no skin off collective backs to say:

“PDF” means “Portable Document Format” or such other format as the Minister made, by Order, approve in accordance with section 5A(2).

So, you would be using the same formula that you use to describe “designated website” to describe the “PDF” version.

Now, Mr. President, if you get to this operation through sections 8 and 9 of the parent Act, the real purpose of this, mischief number one, publish the laws and give judicial notice to the Judiciary, using the digital version, agreed. We have that in clause 5, producing the new sections 5A, 5B, 5C. Conflict between printed and

electronic, electronic prevails. Great. We have covered that mischief. Making it available to the public, we do so by a website, but we do not fix the problem in sections 21 and 22, which requires the printed versions for the errors. So, you have to fix sections 21 and 22 of the parent law by amending section 5 of the parent Act.

When you get to section 8 and section 9, section 8 is the period for revised versions. It is usually a five-year period and you have supplements that go from there. The last official revised version of the laws was in 2006. So we are 20 years away from that. Okay. When you get to section 9, it is unduly restrictive with the current wording, in light of what we want to do electronically. Section 9—now, the Minister in his piloting said: Can you imagine that every time we amend a law, that what we are going to do is as soon as we have amended the law, you have the consolidated version. This Law Revision Act does not allow that. Section 9 says, you can only:

“(1) In special circumstances...appoint a date other than the revision date...for a particular written law specified...”

### **2.45p.m.**

So if you really want the ability to amend the laws immediately after we have consolidated an Act—amended an Act, we consolidate it and you proclaim it, then you have to amend section 9 of the parent Act; delete “special circumstances” and allow the Law Revision Committee, by the Law Revision Act, to simply say:

The Commission may by Order appoint a date other than the revision date as a date for a particular written law to be amended effectively.

So all you are removing is the words, “in special circumstances”. That will allow you, without fetter, the ability to immediately update the laws by the publication of consolidated laws, subject to something I am going to say in a short while.

When you get to the provisions of the tail end of section 10—so section 10

is:

“Certain officers to maintain sets of Laws.”

Section 10(1) says, you give the laws to the six people I referred to, the AG, the Registrar of the Supreme Court, House of Representatives, Senate, and the Archivist.

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

**Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC:** Yes. Okay, the AG does not need a copy. He knows the laws and I am satisfied he does know the laws well.

Section 10(2):

“It shall be the duty of the Commission and each of the officers referred to...to maintain one set of the Laws...”—have them—“...available to the...public...”

What is missing in section 10 is what I am about to propose. Section 10 should have a further section, a section 10(3) that says:

Publication of laws pursuant to section 5A shall constitute compliance for the purposes of this section.

Let me repeat that, section 10 requires a positive statement that says, instead of having to physically print the laws—I am breaking it down—if you simply make a positive statement in section 10, by adding in a new 10(3), if you say:

Publication of laws pursuant to section 5A shall constitute compliance for the purposes of this section—

—well then you no longer are bound to provide the public with hard copies of the law at cost. You can go to the website.

In default of a direct statement such as this, you are bound to spend the millions of dollars in the republication, \$14 million, or otherwise, because you can be compelled to publish the laws. So to preserve the ability for compliance, you

need a positive statement as to what compliance will be. When we get to section 15, which is proposed to be amended in clause 6 of this Bill, I respectfully believe that there is some language missing that the Minister ought to contemplate and consider.

Section 15 says:

“Subject to sections 14 and 17, the pages duly authorised for inclusion in the Laws...”

—and we are adding in:

“including the electronic version of the Laws published under section 5A,”

“...shall, in all Courts...”—et cetera, et cetera—“...for all purposes, be the proper Statute Book...”

So this is where you get the judicial notice and say what the law is, but, really and truly, when you look to the full wording:

Subject to sections 14 and 17, the pages duly authorised for inclusion in the Laws shall, including the electronic version of the Laws published under section 5A, shall in all Courts—et cetera—as in operation on the last revision date...

Now, I want to remind that the last revision date may be under section 8, which is the period of five years, or what other period, by Order, but it may also be a special revision date. That was why I made the submission in respect of section 8 and section 9 of the Act. But what is required flowing from this, is when you get to section 16. Section 16 is the powers of the Commission. In preparation of the laws for revision, we give them certain powers, to omit certain things in law, and then we go to subsection (b):

“to consolidate into one written law any two or more written laws in pari materia...”

So that is where you take two different laws and you consolidate them.

We do not have a positive statement which, I believe, is required that the Law Revision Committee, in preparation of the laws, in my respectful view, ought to have an expressed power to publish consolidated amendments to laws. Why? It would allow the hon. Minister, and the country, the ability, every time we proclaim a law that has been amended, under section 9, that is outside of the long period, it will allow you to consolidate amendments, not of different laws in *pari materia*, but of the law that you wish to publish. There is a material difference between the two.

Mr. President, when we get to section 21 of the parent Act, this is under “errors”, and when you get to section 22, which is the “Alternative mode of amending laws”, I respectfully recommend that the hon. Minister consider introducing specific language. And the language would be this, introduce the words, “or electronically republishing the consolidated amended laws pursuant to section 5A”. So where in 21, it says:

“Where any error made in the publication of the Laws comes to the attention of the Commission, the Commission shall forthwith rectify the error in the manner provided by this section.”

That is:

“The Commission may rectify the...”—order—“by an Order (to be called a ‘Correction Order’) making the required amendments...”

It does not say “electronically”.

Secondly:

“by a Law Revision...removing, inserting or replacing such pages...”

It does not say “electronically”. Thirdly:

“A Correction Order or a Law Revision Order made for the purpose of

rectifying an error may have retrospective effect...”

It does not say that the Order may be published electronically. Fourthly:

“In this section an ‘error’ means the publication by the Commission of a written law...”

I think it necessary to include in section 21, that the Commission, in subsection (2), may rectify the error; keep (a) and (b), which is by a Correction Order, or removing or inserting, but put in a third limb which says:

...or electronically republishing the consolidated amended laws.

Now let me explain what I mean by “republishing”. We had specific litigation on this in the Public Health Regulations. When we did the Public Health Regulations, which were being amended almost every two weeks under the COVID-19 experience, we had the legislative option to amend certain paragraphs in the orders, the public health orders, or to republish the orders. It was recommended, as a matter of law, for the purposes of applicability of the law and as to avoiding arguments on what aspect was retrospective and what aspect was prospective, we took the decision to repeal old Public Health Ordinance laws that were being replaced by new Public Health Ordinance laws. The same principle applies here.

If we are looking to the electronic publication of laws, we are not taking the manual system of this Act, where we go and we take a page and we replace the page, or correcting an error with a page that says, “Ignore that page and just use this one”. What we are doing in an electronic system, is we are effectively republishing the entire thing electronically, and, therefore, Mr. President, I humbly recommend that the hon. Minister should consider including a third option to section 21, which is to allow for the electronic republication of the laws so that you are not confined to the page systems of section 21.

The same thing applies to section 22, which allows the page to continue or to

include an amendment page. It does not allow for an electronic fix to the situation, and in those circumstances—and I know the Minister has taken absolutely no notes, I am sure, because somebody is recording it.

**Hon. Senators:** [*Laughter*]

**Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC:** But I genuinely recommend, hon. Minister, if you want to get this right—not that we are not going to support today, but I genuinely recommend, having done the amendments to the Judiciary to allow for electronic filing, having done the electronic payments into and out of court, I come to you, on behalf of the Opposition, with a considerable amount of experience as to what can go wrong in terms of litigation.

We were sued and challenged by people, including then attorney-at-law, Wayne Sturge, who challenged all of the laws that we brought, which he is now using quite happily and commendably. But what I am trying to tell you is that there will be challenge to these things, because if you do not have the expressed power and you do not cater for the move away from the parent law, which says “insertion of page” or “removal of page”, or “amendment page”, if you do not allow for the amendments to be inserted into—let me put them in summary now. Firstly, section 5 of the parent Act, section 5 should include the words:

...including by electronic means...

So it would read:

The Laws shall be published in loose-leaf form or in such other form, including by electronic means, as the Commission may determine and shall comprise such pages or versions—

Insert, “or versions”:

—as may be authorised to be included under section 6.

That will give you the power to do everything—errors, omissions—electronically.

We currently do not have that in the Bill.

No problems with clause 5 of the Bill, which is confined to clause 5 as it is cross-referenced in the definition section by clause 4, and cross-referenced in clause 6, which amends section 15. But if you take away new sections 5A, B and C, and amended section 15, and amended the definition section, the rest of the law operates without electronic basis, and you therefore have to give that springboard to allow for the electronic introduction.

Again, in summary, I am proposing that section 10 be considered for amendment in the manner I have described. I am proposing that the hon. Minister consider amending sections 20 and 21 by including the ability to do errors, omissions, and alternative modes of amending laws by electronically republishing laws. I am proposing as well that the powers in section 16—I skipped over that—be broadened to allow the Committee to publish consolidated amendments. That is not a power done right now. The consolidation is a very different version. It is to consolidate in one written law, any two or more laws in *pari materia*. There ought to be a separate power to allow for publication of consolidated amendments. That will give you the power to amend the laws in the manner that we suggest.

Mr. President, I could sit and write these amendments out for the hon. Minister. I really would not like to have to do that. I would be very satisfied if the hon. Minister gave an undertaking to look at the proposals, because we can take stage one today. The proposals that we have made and the observations that we have made are intended to join in the legitimate aim and bona fide purpose of the Government in getting electronic publications. I make no criticism of the hon. Minister's intention here today, but I think that there are some more work to be done. I bring that submission forward on the basis of having had to defend the State in litigation brought on electronic transactions, brought on Public Health

Regulations, and challenges for republication, which went all the way up to the Privy Council, Mr. President.

These were not challenges, it was Anand Ramlogan who brought the case of *Suraj* against the Attorney General, seeking to collapse the Public Health Regulations for matters which include the very things which I am saying today. Fortunately, he lost, and we are now able to rely upon *Suratt* and simple majority. But the point here is that it is relevant to this debate, because it is a challenge that could have been brought but which we must step aside from, and as opposed to relying on litigation, give the expressed powers, Mr. President.

Mr. President, save for those submissions, I have nothing further to recommend to the hon. Minister. I would be very pleased if the hon. Minister, to save me the time to written amendments, could at least give the undertaking that he is prepared to look at the amendments suggested and perhaps come back to the Parliament at a different date, lest I fear I would be spending some time to occupy us all at committee stage, which I would not like to do today, Mr. President. Hon. Minister, I am not sure if he wishes to consider that undertaking at this point which would save me the time. Are you, I will give way, hon. Minister?

**Mr. Hosein:** I will deal with it in the winding up.

**Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC:** But then I will have to draft. So in saying that you will proceed with it in the wind-up means I will be compelled to draft the amendments to put them on the record.

I am not asking the Minister to agree with me, you know, I am asking the Minister to give an undertaking to have a look at it. If he discounts it, no problems, he has looked at it, but that is the way that we have so far managed a couple of our debates up here. I know the hon. Member was not here on those

occasions. I will again ask him if he is willing, I will give way. Are you willing to have a look at this? Thank you.

**3.00p.m.**

**Mr. Hosein:** As I said, I will deal with it in the winding up, Senator.

**Sen. F. Al-Rawi SC:** Thank you, hon. Minister. I presume it is something that you wish to reflect upon. I will consider the amendments then, Mr. President. Hopefully, I will not have to. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

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

**Mr. President:** Sen. Anthony Vieira SC.

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

**Sen. Anthony Vieira SC:** Thank you, Mr. President. I hope not to be too long. The importance of up-to-date and reliable information is a recurring theme among thinkers, business leaders, and lawyers, highlighting that accurate data is essential for making informed decisions, while outdated or false information leads to dangerous and misguided actions. Indeed, it has been said that reliable data is the backbone of knowledge. As George Bernard Shaw noted, false knowledge is more dangerous than ignorance. Now, as the hon. Minister of Land and Legal Affairs has confirmed, this law is about providing up-to-date online, free and easy access to citizens. As such, I am happy to support this Bill.

Now, having said that, and before speaking on the Bill itself, let me first say something in defence of paper. The hon. Minister did invite us to dispute his sweeping disregard of the red-bound volumes of the laws and paper-printed versions of our laws. Well, Minister, you are a different generation from me, but I can tell you what a time my generation has had when it comes to keeping up with

all these technological changes. You know, I am a collector of music. I moved from vinyl records, to cassettes, to 8-track cartridges, to CDs, and now it is on digital platforms. When I started practice, we had the brown volumes. Then, whoa, the black laws emerged. I remember Mr. Bourgoutis and FOC Harris in Park Plaza, working and unveiling these laws. We were all so excited about these modern changes in these books that could open up, and you could insert. So, this is a continuation of that. But for the record, I use the red laws in my office. They are not decorative.

**Hon. Senators:** [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

**Sen. A. Vieira SC:** I also use the red laws behind the hon. President's desk when we are debating Bills. My generation tends to be paper-based.

Research confirms that relying on and reading paper offers significant benefits over using digital works, all right, particularly, cognitive benefits, cognitive processing, health and operational reliability. When I use paper, I do not need Wi-Fi, and if electricity goes, not an issue.

**Hon. Senators:** [*Crosstalk and laughter*]

**Sen. A. Vieira SC:** Research indicates that reading on paper results in better comprehension than reading from a screen, deep reading, they call it, rather than scanning or skimming. Last, paper documents do not offer notifications, links or the temptation to switch apps. So, that is my defence of paper.

Let me turn now to the Bill itself. At its core, this is a modest but very important reform. It modernizes the Law Revision Act, so that the laws of Trinidad and Tobago may be published in an authorized electronic form and relied upon in our courts and by legal practitioners. That change matters more than may appear at

first glance. The law is built on certainty, accessibility and reliability. Lawyers, judges, legislators, public servants and citizens must be able to identify the current state of the law quickly and with confidence. When that is difficult, the administration of justice becomes slower, more expensive and less certain. So, in practice, many of us encounter this difficulty regularly.

Last week, for example, right here in this Senate, we had to consider an omnibus Bill amending 11 statutes. Well, boy, preparing for that debate was unnecessarily difficult because updated consolidated versions of several of those statutes were just not available. One had to search through and then cross-reference multiple amendments, multiple laws—in some cases, you had to rely on paper copies—cross-reference informal compilations, just to confirm the current state of the law. That is not how a modern legal system should operate.

In the information age, laws should be accurate, up-to-date and instantly accessible. Many jurisdictions now treat authorized electronic versions of legislation as the official version of the law. For example, in the United Kingdom, I believe they publish authoritative legislation through *legislation.gov.uk* under the framework, and subsequent digital publication reforms. Canada provides official consolidated legislation online through the Department of Justice's website, pursuant to its Legislation Revision and Consolidation Act. So this Bill moves Trinidad and Tobago in that same direction.

By enabling the Law Revision Commission to publish official electronic versions of the laws on a designated website and by allowing those versions, once properly certified, to be used in court, the Bill does several valuable things. First, it improves legal certainty. Practitioners and courts will know that the version

downloaded from the official site is the authoritative version. Secondly, it facilitates legal research. Lawyers, judges, academics and students will have faster access to consolidated legislation without having to reconcile/cross-reference multiple amendment Acts.

Thirdly, it strengthens parliamentary scrutiny. When we debate Bills that amend existing statutes, we will now be able to see clearly what the current law is before deciding how it should be changed. Fourthly, it enhances public access to the law. Citizens, as the hon. Minister has pointed out, will not have to purchase expensive volumes and constantly have to update via the government *Gazette* with piecemeal amendments or have to rely on unofficial sources, simply to know what the law says. And, last but not least, this will reduce the risk of error, as the Bill sensibly provides that where discrepancies arise between printouts and the electronic version, the official electronic text will prevail.

So, in short, this reform helps ensure that the laws of Trinidad and Tobago are not only enacted properly, but are also accessible and intelligible once enacted. For a jurisdiction whose legal system depends heavily on legislation, often amended frequently, this is an essential step toward maintaining confidence in the integrity and reliability of our legal framework. So, for these reasons, I support the Bill, though I do not see it as necessarily signalling the end of paper. I thank you.

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

**Mr. President:** The hon. Leader of Government Business.

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

**Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Sen. The Hon. Darrell Allahar):**

Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I am very happy to rise this afternoon

and say a few words in support of the Bill before us, the Law Revision (Amdt.) Bill, 2026. I did not plan to speak. I thought this was going to be a nice, quick, easy day in the Senate.

**Hon. Senators:** [*Laughter*]

**Sen. The Hon. D. Allahar:** But—

**Hon. Senator:** Blind faith.

**Sen. The Hon. D. Allahar:**—blind faith. Having heard the contribution of a particular Member, I wanted to rise and deal with certain things. But let me deal with some pleasant things first, Mr. President. The Bill has six clauses; a very short Bill, but it has opened up something here. I want, at the outset, first of all, the pleasant thing, to commend my colleague, the hon. Saddam Hosein, Minister of Land and Legal Affairs, for bringing this Bill to the Senate.

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

**Sen. The Hon. D. Allahar:** This Bill was very long incoming. Mr. President; that is a grave understatement. I say so not only as a legislator, but as an attorney-at-law and former law teacher. Long in coming. I want to reminisce a bit, if you would permit me, because Minister Hosein is here. I think Minister Hosein—I hope he remembers, because I used to do it at my first lecture in civil practice and procedure at the law school, the very first lecture. I remember telling him and all his cohorts, one of the first things was that, when you are presented with a legal problem, and you have to solve a legal issue, the first question you ask is, “What is the law?” What is the law?

When you ask, “What is the law?” you do not run to the law library and pull a volume down. Sen. Vieira spoke about the black laws. I know the black laws

very well. I know the red laws very—you do not pull down a law, go to the index, find the Shipping Act, look at the Shipping Act and come and say, “Well, it is section 5 of the Shipping Act”, simply because the Shipping Act is under “S” in the index. Because the law might have been amended. The law might have not been proclaimed. In the law school, we had law students coming to me and answering questions on certain land laws which we never proclaimed. In fact, certain colleagues did that in the profession up to recently.

So, Minister Hosein knows. He knows that the law is a maze and that is why lawyers probably charge so much. The law is a maze. The law is a minefield. To have unconsolidated laws out there increases the cost of legal services because lawyers have to now take the time to find out if this is proclaimed. Is this partially proclaimed? Is this amended? Where was it amended? Were there any cross-references? Did a schedule of another law amend another law?

Sen. Vieira quite rightly spoke about the raft of miscellaneous amendments, which Sen. Al-Rawi, he was the first one to pilot that style. I mean, there is something to be said about legislative convenience in terms of how the chambers deal with it, but it is another thing to pile them up. When you pile them up, you have to now get somebody to unravel all of these things. Which is why in-service trainees in the August vacation used to be given the box of supplements, and—go and unravel that. So, I think, we as legislators, and those of us as legal practitioners, understand and welcome this Bill, and welcome the fact that you can be sued for negligence if you advise a client based on what your understanding of the law is, when, in fact, that was not the law. So, it has implications for that, as well.

Over the past 10 years, we have had an encrusting, like barnacles, of amendments, after amendments, after amendments, whether they come in the Miscellaneous Provisions Acts or notoriously come in the Finance Acts, in the Schedule—because that is sometimes where they are hidden—in the Finance Acts, and you have to unravel them. The Customs Act is one of those, as well, for which we get informal updates every year to help us along. The Income Tax Act, as well, we get informal updates to help us along. But the situation is not the best. It is not the best.

Mr. President, the last consolidation was 2006, I believe—not so? It was 2006. And of course, we have had these unofficial electronic versions, the latest being—and we all know them—when you go on the website, up to 2016, with the caveat that this is not authoritative.

**3.15 p.m.**

Sen. Al-Rawi spoke about the Digital Legislative Library, but we all know when you look at the disclaimer in that as well, it says that it is not the authoritative version of the law. So there is a risk that practitioners, those who have to advise, have to take—those in this Chamber as well, when we are debating legislation, that you either go and look at it and do it manually yourself, or you take what is there because it may be prone to human error as well. So it is something that we have to work out and that is what we are trying to do with this piece of legislation.

Mr. President, Sen. Al-Rawi, has this unique ability, with the greatest respect, I will call it an anaesthetic ability to consolidate 10 years of inactivity into 40 minutes.

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

**Sen. The Hon. D. Allahar:** He has come here and he has not told us why, during seven years under his leadership as Attorney General nothing was done. This is six clauses. This is six clauses but, I understand why nothing was done because he took a six-clause Bill and turned it into something so complex that I do not think anybody in this room still understands what he just said, and then has the gall to come and tell this Chamber that he will put amendments on the Floor if it is the hon. Minister does not give an undertaking to consider his proposals. That is objectionable and offensive to say the least, it is holding us *in terrorem* because he is going to cause this Sitting to go on for another two hours with an amendment to every clause here. That is not right, Mr. President, it is not right. But he has not told us why in 10 years—well, I understand it is so complex to him now. He has made six clauses so complex but he has not told us why in 10 years he did not do anything, and we know why.

You see, Mr. President, there is the rule of law which the PNM knows nothing about, and for the rule of law to be properly observed, laws must be publicly available, they must be updated so that individuals know and their legal advisers know their rights and obligations and their duties easily, but that is not the PNM way. Their way is to hide, to obfuscate, and to do things in silence and in darkness, okay. That is why nothing was done, nothing was done for 10 years. Six clauses, you know. Six clauses to get this thing done. So do not come and tell us about the Digital Legislative Library, it is not authoritative and please, Mr. President, I do not think, with the greatest respect, Sen. Al-Rawi can come here and tell the Chief Parliamentary Counsel and the Law Revision Commission how to do their jobs.

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

**Sen. The Hon. D. Allahar:** We are guided by experts. We are guided by experts. The Chief Parliamentary Counsel, not the senior counsel, the Chief Parliamentary Counsel. So he has come and said that there is more work to be done and there is more work to be done, when will it end? For 10 years, there was more work to be done and no work was done, Mr. President. Mr. President, that is their way, that is the PNM way.

The importance of this Bill, Mr. President, has to also do with the attraction of foreign investors to this country, you would not think so, but that is important. Because when investors come here and cannot get a clear view of the law, it undermines confidence in our legal system, Mr. President. And for 10 years somebody on the outside looking in would wonder, we cannot get a straight answer as to what the law is here. We have to go through all of these hoops and all of these hurdles to get an answer as to what the law is. I just thought I would put that in because I think that is important.

You know, as we are on the topic of protection of the law, something alien to the PNM, Mr. President, Sen. Al-Rawi again invokes *Suratt* and *Suraj* and so on. That is his favourite thing, I suppose it takes up time in the 40 minutes. *Suratt* and *Suraj*, *Suratt* and *Suraj*. It is an invocation, it is like a chant, a mantra as they say, but let us go down that line. Let us look at the same constitutional right to protection of the law, which the Privy Council said in *Commissioner of Prisons v Seepersad* case in 2021, out of the Privy Council. It is a broad and all-encompassing right incorporating access to justice and access to courts, and access to legal advice, and I dare say, Mr. President, that no one here can deny that access to justice and access to the law would necessarily involve access to authoritative copies of the law as they are enforced without frustration and without impediment.

And if that is so, Mr. President, Sen. Al-Rawi likes to talk about *mandamus*

and we would be sued, judicial review and he has gone all the way to the courthouse already with a simple six-clause Bill. But he has not told us that in 10 years, his administration may have been in breach of that protection of the law clause by denying citizens the right to have an un-frustrated access to the updated laws of this country.

So do not come here and talk about *mandamus* and scare us with your amendments, we are not afraid. We are not afraid of that. Sometimes I wonder if you are piloting the Bill here, but you are not.

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

**Sen. The Hon. D. Allahar:** So, Mr. President, again, let me say how happy I am that this is finally being done and it took a UNC Government only a few months to get this thing going when those on the other side took 10 years and did nothing. Spoke for 40 minutes and said nothing, and now come here to praise themselves for doing nothing for 10 years and expect us to sit down and to accept amendments simply because you want us to go home early, that is not so. You can put your amendments, you can put your amendments, we are not threatened by them. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

**Mr. President:** Sen. Janelle John-Bates.

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

**Sen. Janelle John-Bates:** Mr. President, I thank you for the opportunity to lend my support to what we consider a positive move in legislation. This Law Revision (Amdt.) Bill, 2026 at its core, brings practical and necessary modernization to how laws in Trinidad and Tobago are published and accessed. The Bill enables the Law Revision Commission to publish official electronic versions of the revised laws which once properly certified may be used in our courts without requiring proof and may be relied upon by practitioners, public officials, and citizens alike.

At present, while copies of our laws exist online, they are not official consolidated versions and in many cases, they have not been updated in a coherent manner since the 2015 revised edition. As a result, anyone attempting to determine the current state of the law must often consult multiple amending Acts and piece them together manually. This Bill therefore addresses a simple but important problem, access to reliable, authoritative and up-to-date law.

So Mr. President, my contribution I had originally intended it to be very brief, to give 3 reasons why I support this Bill and the benefits that I see coming out of this Bill. But, Mr. President, unfortunately, I have to divert a bit from what I had originally intended to say to respond to Sen. Allahar. Now, Mr. President, Sen. Allahar stood in his seat and in summary—

**Hon. Senator:** Stood in his seat? Stood by his seat.

**Sen. J. John-Bates:** Stood by his seat, stood in his place, it does not detract from what I am about to say. He stood there and for 10 minutes attempted to tell us on this side what we can and cannot do as the Opposition. He indicated that, in summary, Sen. Al-Rawi was telling the CPC how to do their job. Sen. Al-Rawi does not have to tell anybody how to do their job because he is focused on his job. His job as an Opposition Senator is to hold the Government accountable, and it is also

to ensure that we have sound legislation. So if Sen. Al-Rawi took the time to go through not only the Bill itself but the parent law and identify what I would say are sound suggestions, you cannot stand here and reprimand him for that. He is not attempting to hold us ransom, he is simply asking, in the interest of time, if the Government would simply indicate if they are willing to consider his recommendations and amendments.

Now, Sen. Allahar asked over and over, why, why. Why in 10 years there

was no update to the laws? Now, if Sen. Allahar had paid attention to what Sen. Al-Rawi said, instead of attempting to come here and be condescending in nature, he would have heard the reason why. Sen. Al-Rawi clearly stated that the last government was taking the modernization of our laws and our systems in a step-by-step manner. The first focus was on digitization of our Registrar General's Office and then there was a focus on the digitization of the Judiciary, then there was a focus on the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic laws. Step by step. We do not put the cart before the horse on this side, okay.

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

**Sen. J. John-Bates:** Be that as it may, we still support the law. We will not be deterred by Sen. Allahar's contribution, brief and irrelevant as it was. So, we support the Bill, we said that. We have said that over and over as the Opposition, we support sound legislation. That does not mean that we would not suggest amendments, but we support the Bill, the essence of the Bill, we support it.

Now, Mr. President, one of the core principles of the rule of law is that the laws must be publicly accessible, intelligible and clear. In order for citizens to comply with the law, laws cannot be difficult to locate, they cannot be scattered across numerous amending Acts, they cannot be only available through unofficial compilations. In this and every other democratic legal system, the law must be easily accessible and comprehensible to law. At present, many citizens rely on online versions of our law, which can be found on the Digital Legislative Library website. Unfortunately, the most recent consolidation of the laws on that website is updated to December 2015. And when you pull it up at the bottom of every law, it is labelled "unofficial version." If you want to get the official version, you have to get the printed red books.

Now, this Bill seeks to remedy that problem where you either have to use the

unofficial digital version or find the printed official version, and that is very significant. It says that the Law Revision Commission will designate an official website for the publication of electronic versions of the law. So the effect of this reform in a practical sense is that attorneys, students, journalists, researchers, they will no longer have to rely on the official printed volumes or the official compilations. It simply makes it easy for citizens wherever they reside, whether it be Palo Seco, Point Cumana, Parlatuvier, they will have the law at their fingertips.

A modern legal system cannot require citizens to depend solely on physical laws that are located in a library that may not be within easy access to them.

### **3.30 p.m.**

The physical revised version is not convenient. Now, I know Sen. Vieira stood in defence of the physical version, and I see both sides. Now, I remember as a young prosecutor, some 15 years ago, practising in the Magistrates' Courts all over this country, having to tote a trolley bag with the laws copied—not necessarily the red books—copying—I had to go home and physically copy the laws, the red books, tote those, along with the cases, all up and down Arima, Sangre Grande, Chaguanas. There was actually at one point where a man stopped me and asked me if I was a travel agent because he saw me with this big trolley bag in maxi going here, there, everywhere.

Also, I can remember, as the Minister would have indicated, having to update the red books manually. In the DPP's Office, every person had an office filled with these books. Back then, it was not decorative. We were not taking selfies by them. We were actually using them. One day they came—similar to what the hon. Minister, who piloted the Bill, explained—dropped some boxes and said, "Update your laws." They are not going to do it for us. So after an hour of manually opening the books, trying to figure out what page to remove, what page

to put in, I gave up. I just focused on the criminal laws because that is what we are here to practise and I left those boxes on the ground for years and only updated them as needed. So, I am very much in favour of having this digital version, official version of the law to remove the need to tote these physical versions all over.

However, last night, I attempted to access the Digital Legislative Library online. The system was down; absolutely unable to access the laws as needed. Unfortunately, I am currently a sole practitioner. I do not have red books for decorative or any other purpose, so I was bereft of the laws. So, we do need both. We need to have the electronic version, we need to have the paper version. We never know what happens. Right?

Now, the second point I would like to make in favour of this law, this Bill, is the legal certainty that it brings through the official electronic version. Now, this was touched upon by other speakers, and the Bill provides electronic versions of the law published on a designated website, which would be deemed official and authoritative and therefore, it provides certainty—sorry, provided that certain conditions are met.

Now, the hon. Minister who piloted the Bill would have spoken about testing technology and security, and he referenced the E-Vrfy System. I assume to say that a similar thing would be put in place as it relates to the official laws. I commend that. So, I will not go further but to say that it is critical that these electronic versions of the law are now accepted by the courts as official copies, because it ensures that courts, attorneys, government agencies and members of the public are all working from the same definitive version of the law. That promotes consistency, clarity and reliability in legal interpretation.

Now, having these electronic laws officially designated, as they will be,

makes for efficiency in revision and making of legislation. I had here in my notes to make the same point as Sen. Vieira made in relation to the omnibus Bill we had to undertake last week, and we had a similar exercise earlier last year—well, late last year as it relates to the first FATF Bill. I must agree with Sen. Vieira, it was an arduous task. That Bill, the Bill from last week, the Miscellaneous Provisions (FATF Compliance) Bill, amended 11 other Bills—11 other Acts, sorry, one of which was the Companies Act. On the Digital Legislative Library website, the Companies Act is updated up to 2015 and there are 13 revisions after that. So in order to understand what the law was doing, I had to go and look at all 13 of those revisions to ensure there were no amendments to any of Acts that the FATF Bill was referring to. I need not explain that exercise anymore. But this Bill helps to move us away from that patchwork of statutes, towards a single, reliable, consolidated version.

Most of what I had to say was touched on, so I do not want to get into the realm of tedious repetition. But there is one thing I want to mention before I close. It relates to accessibility for all, including the differently abled. So in addition to ensuring that the website remains up to date—because this Bill states that the electronic version will take precedence over the physical version, so we have to ensure that that electronic version is maintained.

But in addition to that, I want to ask that the website, whatever website is used—I am going to assume it will remain on the Digital Legislative Library website. But even if they migrate to another website, I want to ask that it be optimized to make it easier to navigate by all citizens. These are two things that I noted from the current website. The current Digital Legislative Library website does not have a search facility. It has a search button that allows you to search if you know the name of Act, the title. So if you wanted to find out something about

assault and battery, and you knew that you could find it the Summary Offences Act, you could put that in and you will get the Summary Offences Act and you could have a look. But if you did not know where to find the law on assault and battery, and you put in the word “assault”, you will get no results.

So going back to that point of rule of law, and law being accessible and comprehensible to all systems, I will ask that the website not only allows you to search the title, but allows you to search the words. So anybody, citizens and lawyers alike—because every lawyer is not familiar or comfortable with every single Act—make it easier to find what you are looking for.

The second thing speaks specifically to access by the differently abled. I am asking that this—whatever website is used includes accessibility tools like keyboard-friendly navigation and adjustable text size. The current website does not allow that.

So, in closing, Mr. President, this Bill improves how our laws are accessed and maintained and relied on by enabling the publication of official electronic versions of the revised laws. The Bill promotes access to justice, legal certainty, administrative efficiency and modernization of the legal system. In a society governed by the rule of law, the law must not only exist, it must also be accessible, authoritative and up to date. This Bill advances these objectives in a practical and sensible way, and it would be enhanced by the amendments suggested by Sen. Al-Rawi. But be that as it may, whether those amendments are accepted or not, I do support the Bill and I am pleased to give that indication. Thank you.

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

**Mr. President:** The Minister of Land and Legal Affairs and Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

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

**The Minister of Land and Legal Affairs and Minister in the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (Hon. Saddam Hosein):** Thank you very much, Mr. President. I have a few matters that I would just like to deal with now. I would like to just respond briefly to Sen. Vieira on your use of paper. We are not abolishing paper in this Bill. Let me just make that abundantly clear. The both systems are running concurrently. So you are happy to read the printed versions of the laws. You could also print the electronic version of the law and read that also. So, I know that you are quite an advocate for climate change, so I hope that you do change your mind with respect to paper-based reading.

With respect to Sen. John-Bates, there is really nothing to respond to, except to say that I think she was just buying time for Sen. Al-Rawi to finish his amendments. Sen. John-Bates, I think you may need to check your Internet connection, because I checked and the Digital Legislative Library was working last night.

The third point that you raised was the differently able. That is a suggestion that, definitely, we will take into consideration when we deal with the new publication of the official versions of the law. So that is one thing we will look at.

Now, Sen. Al-Rawi—Mr. President, again, I do not want to do this, but when I worked with the late Dana Seetahal, she always told me, she said, “If you cannot explain something simply, it means you do not understand it.” Sen. Al-Rawi, with his special talent, spoke for 40 minutes and I do not think any person in the Chamber understood what he meant.

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

**Hon. S. Hosein:** So that means he himself does not understand what he was saying. Mr. President, it is very difficult for us on this side to take legal advice from my colleague. You see, my colleague spent more time in the law school as a

student than being the Attorney General of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Senators:** [*Interruption*]

**Hon. S. Hosein:** Mr. President, my good friend, Sen. Al-Rawi, said, you know, there was significant digitization of the Ministry of Legal Affairs. But what they did, Mr. President, is that they placed the Ministry of Legal Affairs under the Office of the Attorney General and gave it no attention. None. My first visit to the Law Revision Commission, when I went in there, Mr. President, the complaints I received, I was appalled. Do you know that they did not have Wi-Fi in that building? That is the significant digitization. You know when I went to the conference room, there was not even a projector. They had a DVD player. A DVD player, you know. I kid you not. Every single time the Chairman of the Law Revision Commission comes to see me, I said, “Do you still have the DVD player?” I do not know what digitization Sen. Al-Rawi was talking about, with his seven years as the Attorney General. “Dat cyah be right.” You see, they had no intention of doing these things that would benefit the public because they were busy dealing with drawing claims against Malcolm Jones—

**Hon. Senators:** “Hmmm”.

**Hon. S. Hosein:**—and cutting deals with Vincent Nelson. That is what they were busy doing. Interfering in the independent Police Service Commission until it collapsed, not about bringing the legislation here to deal with creating up-to-date official access of the laws of Trinidad and Tobago. He said, “I must take the baton and carry it.” Mr. President, I am running my own race here.

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

**Hon. S. Hosein:** I am running my own race. You see, Sen. Al-Rawi seems to believe that the Digital Legislative Library was something that was launched by their administration. Now, there is a CNN article online dated 5<sup>th</sup> of August, 2015:

“Ministry of Legal Affairs launched Digital Legislative Library

The Ministry of Legal Affairs launched a Digital Legislative Library of Trinidad and Tobago this morning. The digital library will contain legislative material dating back to the 1800’s. Costing the government just under three million dollars Minister of Legal Affairs Prakash”—Ramadhar—“said this is a proud moment in the legislative history of Trinidad and Tobago.”

So when we left government in 2015, we are here 11 years later to finish the job that we started then.

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

**Hon. S. Hosein:** Then the Senator said, “You know, be careful with this online thing because some member of the public can take you to court and ask for a *mandamus*”—I do not know if he understands what that means—“and they will compel us to print laws.” Did we say we are not printing the law? We said we are doing printed laws, but we are also doing online laws. So that entire argument falls immediately.

Then the Senator talks about rectification and so on. The Bill is very clear; very clear. At section 5C, which is a new clause, it says very clearly:

“Where a change or correction is made to any written law which is already published on the designated website, the Commission shall publish on the designated website, a notice of the change or correction.”

Now, this is advice given to us by the experts, by the CPC, the Office of the Attorney General. So, why should I not take their advice and take the advice of Sen. Al-Rawi, who was fired as the Attorney General of this country?

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

**Hon. S. Hosein:** “Ah mean, ah cyah do dat”, Mr. President. I will be abdicating

responsibility to the good people of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

**Hon. S. Hosein:** So, Mr. President, the Opposition can file as many amendments as they would like. Today, we are taking a progressive approach in order to ensure that this Government commits to this digital era by bringing Trinidad and Tobago within the modern world, and we will join our friends in other jurisdictions where we can have modern, up-to-date laws and systems to benefit the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

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

**Hon. S. Hosein:** So, Mr. President, I would like to thank the hard-working staff at the Law Revision Commission, and I beg to move.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**3.45p.m.**

*Bill accordingly read a second time.*

*Bill committed to a committee of the whole Senate.*

*Senate in committee.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Senators, there are six clauses contained in the Bill. We have no written amendments before this Senate. I propose to go collectively with the six clauses with your leave.

**Sen. Al-Rawi SC:** Mr. Chairman?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Sen. Al-Rawi SC:** I only had one question on clause 4. I have prepared written amendments, but we closed the debate earlier than expected, so I did not bother to send them to the Clerk. It would have been unfair to him. But I have one question in relation to clause 4. I made my submissions on the record, and they form part of

the record.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah, but—so I have no written amendments to clause 4.

**Sen. Al-Rawi SC:** I have them if you wish me to circulate them, Mr. Chairman. We did not have time, as I explained, because we did not have enough speakers on the Floor as normally would. So if you wish me to ask for your permission to circulate the amendments, then I will, but save for that, it is one question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Alright, we will take all six clauses together, and I will give a few moments, brief moments to ask for your clarification.

**Sen. Al-Rawi SC:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** I want to make it very clear. We are not going into a long toing and froing, in terms of areas, amendments that are not before us. As everyone knows, in the debate I listened very attentively, and I think most colleagues did as well. I think that you exhausted many areas that you had been concerned about. So I hope that when I do give you a few moments, you will be brief. Otherwise, I will have to take measures to ensure that I proceed accordingly. So let us proceed.

*Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 4.*

*Question proposed:* That clause 4 stand part of the Bill.

**Mr. President:** I will pause. I will ask Sen. Al-Rawi SC, to just briefly clarify clause 4, give you an intervention. Make your intervention on clause 4. Sen Faris Al-Rawi SC.

**Sen. Al-Rawi SC:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Attorney General, the definition of PDF means portable document format. Is it within your consideration, insofar as operating in clause 5, that it must be a PDF that you would seek to amend it to include the words “or such other format as the Minister may, by Order, specify” in accordance with section 5A(1), just as you have for “designated website.”

Reasoning being that if you have to go for a format other—if you look at how it works in 5A (3)(b):

“...electronic copy or printout...deemed to be an official... authoritative if—

(b) it is in PDF...”

The only way that the PDF can be something other than (2) would be really tied back to the definition. So the way in which you have used the reference back in 5A (1) to “designated website” suggests that it may be prudent to also put the same format for PDF for your consideration.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Attorney General.

**Sen. Jeremie SC:** Chair, I note the very helpful statement by Sen. Al-Rawi. If you look down a few lines, you will see—as I think he did, he adverted to it. That in 5, which follows 4, of course, 5(A)(2) there is a reference there:

“...an electronic version of the Laws that is published on the designated website shall be in PDF...”—

And then the words:

“...or such other format as the Minister may, by Order, approve.”

We think that the amendments on the Bill, as it is drafted, take into account all that is necessary, and we are not prepared to revisit clause 4.

**Sen. Al-Rawi SC:** Thank you, Attorney General.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause 4 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Clause 5 and 6 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Question put and agreed to:* That the Bill be reported to the Senate.

*Senate resumed.*

*Bill reported, without amendment.*

*Question put:* That the Bill be now read a third time.

**Hon. Senator:** Division.

**Mr. President:** Division.

*The Senate voted:*

Ayes 30

**AYES**

Allahar, Hon. D.

Jeremie SC, Hon. J.

Roberts, Hon. A.

Maharaj, Hon. S.

Baptiste, Hon. L.

Alexander, Hon. P.

Persad, Hon. Prof. P.

Ratiram, Hon. R.

Charles, Ms. K.

Zakour, Hon. E.

Smith, Hon. D.

Nakhid, D.

Jack, A.

Ramsubeik, A.

Rasheed, D.

Browne, Dr. A.

Al-Rawi SC, F.

Dhanpaul, V.

John-Bates, Mrs. J.

London, Ms. K.

Phillips, P.

Vieira SC, A.

de la Bastide SC, M.

Jones-Simmons, Ms. C.

Lewis, F.

Murray, Dr. D.

Lalite-Ettienne, Mrs. A.

Mc Nish, C.

Gibbings, W.

Phillips, Ms. Z.

*Question agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.*

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

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr. President:** The hon. Leader of Government Business.

**Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Sen. The Hon. Darrell Allahar):**

Thank you, Mr. President. I was just waiting for the Bill to be read a third time, which it was.

**Mr. President:** Yes, I understand.

**Sen. The Hon. D. Allahar:** So, Mr. President, having had a very good session, Sitting, I now beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Senate adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 3.59p.m.*