HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, November 13, 2026

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communication from the hon. Vandana Mohit, Member for Chaguanas East; Mr. Joel Sampson, Member for Tobago West, and Mr. Stuart Young, SC, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, who have all requested leave of absence from today's Sitting of the House. The leave which the Members have sought is hereby granted.

PAPERS LAID

1. Immigration (Amendment) Regulations, 2026. [*The Minister of Homeland Security* (*Hon. Roger Alexander*)]
2. Special Operations (Closed Area) Order, 2026. [*Hon. R. Alexander*]
3. Special Operations (Curfew) Order, 2026. [*Hon. R. Alexander*]
4. Senior Citizens' Pension (Amendment of Schedule) Order, 2026. [*The Minister of Public Utilities and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister* (*Hon. Barry Padarath*)]
5. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of the Chaguanas Borough Corporation for the year ended September 30, 2016. [*The Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development* (*Hon. Davendranath Tancoo*)]
6. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Financial Statements of Police Complaints Authority for the year ended

7. September 30, 2025. [*Hon. D. Tancoo*] Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Statement of Recovery of Expenses of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries for the year ended December 31, 2025. [*Hon. D. Tancoo*]

8. Audited Financial Statements of the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards for the year ended September 30, 2025. [*Hon. D. Tancoo*]

Papers 5 to 8 to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before we move to the next Item on the Order Paper, can I just announce that the Hon. Mr. Clyde Elder, the Member for La Brea, had also sought leave, but that was not brought to my attention until a few moments ago. That leave is also granted.

URGENT QUESTION

Marine Collision off Chaguaramas (Search and Rescue Operations)

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin West.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Hans Des Vignes (*Diego Martin West*)**:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Through you to the Minister of Defence. In light of Sunday's tragic marine collision off Chaguaramas, which left persons missing at sea and bodies being recovered, can the Minister state what assets were deployed at the time of the accident to rescue/recover victims?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister of Defence.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Defence (Hon. Wayne Sturge): Mr. Speaker, the events of last Sunday are very unfortunate events. The Government wishes to commiserate and express its condolences to the families of those whose lives were lost. With

regard to the question, permit me to say that, having regard to the fact that these events are now the subject of a police investigation, it would be unwise to reveal too much, and more particularly what is requested at this stage.

I do, however, pledge on behalf of the Government to make a comprehensive statement on this matter at the appropriate time.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Des Vignes: It is a tragic time in the constituency of Diego Martin West, especially—

Mr. Speaker: Could you ask a question?

Mr. Des Vignes:—when questions like this cannot be answered. Supplemental. Can the Minister indicate what additional Coast Guard patrol assets and active enforcement mechanisms are being deployed in Chaguaramas and other coastal waters to help prevent, in future, tragedies of this sort?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Member, I am of the view that that does not qualify as a legitimate supplemental question. Member, you have a second question.

Mr. Des Vignes: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Defence, what do you have to say to these families that are grieving today?

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: That is enough.

Mr. Des Vignes: And you came to the Parliament not to answer—

Mr. Speaker: Member, have a seat, have a seat, have a seat. This is a question, you know. This is not—look, you have been here a year and more. I do not think I need to elucidate these Standing Orders to you. All right? Okay. Let us move to the next Item of business on the Order Paper, please, Clerk.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister of Defence.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Defence (Hon. Wayne Sturge): Mr. Speaker, I have been authorized by the Cabinet to make this statement. Mr. Speaker, in an increasingly dynamic and ever-evolving security environment, the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force continues to play a critical role in safeguarding national sovereignty, securing our land and maritime borders, supporting civil authorities, protecting critical infrastructure and responding to emergencies and natural disasters, both locally and regionally.

The strength of any military institution rests ultimately with its personnel. The men and women of the TTDF continue to serve with professionalism, discipline and dedication in the execution of their duties. In recognition of their contribution, the Government has pursued a comprehensive programme aimed at strengthening the defence force through targeted investments in compensation, personnel development, force renewal and expansion, military infrastructure and long-term intuitional growth. These initiatives are intended not only to address immediate requirements but also to ensure that the defence force remains positioned to support the national security and development objectives of Trinidad and Tobago well into the future.

On the issue of salary increases and outstanding arrears, the total approved permanent manpower strength of the TTDF is 5,970 souls. Presently, the complement of filled positions stands at 4,633. Mr. Speaker, an important priority of the Government has been the resolution of outstanding compensation matters affecting both serving and retired military personnel. Cabinet, at its meeting on January 22, 2026, approved the revised salaries and allowances for members of the

defence force for the period January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022. The settlement provides for cumulative salary increases of 5 per cent over the triennium, comprising adjustments of 1 per cent in 2020, 1 per cent in 2021 and 3 per cent in 2022, together with revisions to certain military allowances and benefits.

This settlement represents a significant investment in defence force personnel and reflects the Government's commitment to ensuring that military compensation remains aligned with the responsibilities and demands associated with military service. This Government is currently finalizing arrangements to facilitate the payment of the salary increases and associated arrears to eligible men and women of the defence force. It is anticipated that approximately 4,633 serving members will benefit from the approved settlement.

In addition, an estimated 224 members who retired during the review period are expected to benefit through adjustments to pensions, gratuities and other retirement-related entitlements.

Mr. Speaker, collectively, these measures will provide meaningful financial benefit to more than 4,853 current and former members of the defence force and civil serving forces, Government's commitment to fairness, recognition of service and institutional stability. The additional cost of implementing the above-mentioned revised rates of pay and agreed allowances is estimated at $61.25 million, while the recurrent annual additional cost of implementing the revised rates of pay and agreed allowances is estimated at $56.42 million.

On recruitment, force renewal and capability enhancement, Mr. Speaker, while the welfare of defence force personnel remains a key priority, the long-term effectiveness of the organisation also depends on maintaining an appropriate balance between manpower, equipment and operational capability.

The defence force's current authorized establishment was developed based on manpower models and operational assumptions that are no longer applicable. Notwithstanding the approved establishment strength, long-standing vacancies have resulted in personnel levels remaining below authorized strength.

To address these shortfalls, in 2026, approval was granted for the recruitment and training of 200 personnel for the regiment, 125 for the coast guard and 40 for the air guard. These recruit intakes are intended to reduce the existing manpower gaps and progressively increase force strength within the approved establishment. The public response to this initiative has been exceptionally encouraging. In July 2026, the defence force commenced a recruitment and selection exercise, which attracted over 17,000 applications.

Mr. Speaker, following a comprehensive selection process involving aptitude assessments, medical examinations, interviews, security vetting and suitability evaluations, 104 candidates have thus far been enlisted and are currently undergoing training for the coast guard and air guard. Recruitment activities for the regiment are scheduled for completion today. An additional 100 candidates are expected to commence military training thereafter. The overwhelming public response reflects continued confidence in the defence force as a national institution and demonstrates the willingness of many young citizens to contribute to national development through military service.

Mr. Speaker, Government recognizes, however, that personnel growth must be accompanied by investments in resources necessary to support military operations and, in that vein, more than $30 million has been allocated for the acquisition of new operational vehicles and equipment. This investment will improve mobility, strengthen operational reach, and assist in the execution of

security operations, emergency response activities and support to civil authorities throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Additional funding has also been identified for the procurement of uniforms, operational equipment and other essential military items required to sustain military capability and support frontline operations. Together, these initiatives form part of an ongoing force renewal programme designed to strengthen institutional capacity and ensure that military personnel are supported by the equipment and resources necessary to perform their duties effectively.

On the issue of force expansion, whilst ongoing recruitment efforts are intended to reduce existing vacancies, Government recognizes that the nation's strategic requirements have evolved significantly over time. As such, a review of the defence force's long-term manpower requirements and organizational structure has been conducted.

1.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, existing vacancies have resulted in a manpower deficit of approximately 1,146 positions. Ongoing recruitment exercises are therefore intended to progressively narrow this gap and strengthen force capacity within the approved establishment. Beyond addressing current vacancies, the Government is evaluating proposals aimed at expanding the overall manpower capacity of the Defence Force by approximately 3,300 additional personnel, bringing the total number of personnel in the defence force to 9,270 across all formations. Such growth must be carefully planned and responsibly implemented.

Reviews are therefore underway to assess associated infrastructural requirements, accommodation capacity, training facilities, equipment holdings, logistical support arrangements, and long-term financial implications, the objective being to ensure that future growth is aligned with national priorities, operational

requirements and the evolving responsibilities of the Defence Force. It is anticipated that proposals relating to this expansion will be submitted to Cabinet for consideration during the first quarter of fiscal 2027—sorry, 2027.

On the issue of retention of experienced personnel, pension reform and personnel welfare, as the Government seeks to strengthen the future of the Defence Force, equal consideration must be given to retaining the experienced leadership and specialist expertise already resident within the organization. Following extensive review and consultation, Cabinet, at its sitting on May 21st, 2026, approved a revised framework governing retirement ages and service extensions within the Defence Force. Under these arrangements, the compulsory retirement age for officer holders holding the rank of Major in the regiment and equivalent ranks in the coast guard and air guard, these ranks and below has been increased. The age has been increased from 47 years to 50 years. Similar adjustments have also been approved for Sergeants, Corporals and junior ranks in the regiment and corresponding ranks in the coast guard and air guard.

Cabinet further approved controlled service extensions up to three additional years, granted in one-year increments for Colonels of the regiment, Naval Captains of the coast guard and Group Captains of the air guard, Lieutenant Colonels, Regiment Commanders of the coast guard and Wing Commanders of the air guard, together with selected Warrant Officers of the regiment, Chief Petty Officers of the coast guard and Warrant Officers of the air guard, where organizational requirements, operational considerations and individual performance support continued service. These measures will assist in maintaining institutional continuity, preserving critical expertise and supporting effective succession management during a period of organizational development.

The Government also recognizes that the effectiveness of military personnel

is influenced by the quality of support systems available to them throughout their careers.

Mr. Speaker: Minister.

Hon. W. Sturge: Consequently, Mr. Speaker, investments are being directed toward strengthening—

Mr. Speaker: Minister, Minister. Can I get your attention? The 10-minute period is up, and there is no application to suspend the Standing Orders to allow you to finish in time—to speak until the end. So, your 10 minutes are up. I mean, I have read the statement. I think you have covered the substance of what you intended to say. The rest of it really is, but I am afraid your 10 minutes are up.

Hon. W. Sturge: Obliged.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Commonwealth Heads of Government 2026

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs (Hon. Sean Sobers): Mr. Speaker, the Cabinet has authorized me to make the following statement. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago participated in the 2026 Meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government in Antigua and Barbuda from the 1st to the 4th, November 2026. The theme for CHOGM 2026 was "Accelerating Partnerships and Investment for a Prosperous Commonwealth".

During the conference, the Trinidad and Tobago delegation participated in a number of high-level meetings including: The reception and dinner hosted by His Majesty King Charles III, Head of the Commonwealth; CHOGM 2026 Executive Sessions related to Trade and Investment; Systemic Issues and Climate Finance and Investing in People; Commonwealth Business Forum; Heads of Government

Retreat; Bilateral discussions with a number of countries, including the United Kingdom, Ghana, Canada, India, Australia and Sri Lanka; Commonwealth Youth Forum, attended by the hon. Minister of Sport and Youth Development; Commonwealth Women's Forum, attended by the hon. Minister of the People, Social Development and Family Services, both of whom were featured as panellists on these discussions.

Commonwealth People's Forum, which was also attended by Minister Mohit and the Commonwealth Business Forum; the Commonwealth Ministerial Meeting on Small States; the Global Summit for Eye Health and Exhibition, a brief which was thankfully submitted by the hon. Minister of Health Dr. Bodoe; Commonwealth Sports Summit for Development and Peace, which was attended by the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, Minister Watts; Commonwealth Event on Blue Economy and Innovation; Commonwealth Event on Governance and Democracy; Commonwealth Roundtable on Technologies for National Security and Resilience; a Commonwealth discussion—roundtable discussion—on Resilient Commonwealth Supply Chains and the Commonwealth roundtable discussion on energy resilience across the Commonwealth.

Mr. Speaker, our participation at the CHOGM was not ceremonial. It was strategic as Trinidad and Tobago advanced several national priorities at CHOGM 2026 in the areas of Climate Resilience and Energy Transition. As a small-island State sharing the burden that accompanies climate change, Trinidad and Tobago called for and received commitments for accelerated access to climate finance, loss and damage funding, and investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and resilient infrastructure.

Trade, Investment and Economic Diversification. Under the CHOGM theme of partnerships and investment, Trinidad and Tobago promoted our country as a stable, competitive destination for investment in energy, manufacturing, creative industries, tourism, agriculture and the digital economy. We supported the Commonwealth's work to reduce intra-Commonwealth trade costs, strengthen supply chains, support MSMEs, and expand opportunities for women and youth entrepreneurs. We also engaged in bilateral discussions with Commonwealth partners on trade, double taxation, air connectivity, and investment facilitation.

Food Security and Protection of Critical Infrastructure, which is extremely important, Mr. Speaker. In line with Trinidad and Tobago's impending advocacy in the United Nations Security Council, we raised the protection of energy and food infrastructure in armed conflict and in times of disaster, and the importance of resilient food systems for small-island States. We called for greater Commonwealth cooperation on food production, storage, logistics, and emergency preparedness, so that no Commonwealth citizen faces hunger because of conflict, climate shocks or supply chain disruption.

Youth, Education, Digital Innovation and Equality. Trinidad and Tobago also championed investment in youth skills, digital literacy, artificial intelligence governance, and the creative economy.

Reparatory Justice, Democracy, and the Rule of Law. Trinidad and Tobago also participated constructively in discussions on reparatory justice, acknowledging the United Kingdom's new pledge to the same. The Commonwealth Business Forum also generated new commitments for investment in renewable energy, youth skills, trade, and economic development across the Commonwealth, from

which Trinidad and Tobago stands to benefit. Mr. Speaker, as an outcome of the meeting, heads of Government adopted the CHOGM 2026 communiqué, reaffirming all CHOGM mandates and commitments to building a more peaceful, healthy, prosperous and resilient Commonwealth.

Of particular relevance to Trinidad and Tobago, leaders committed to the following: Accelerating partnerships and investment for sustainable development, with a focus on small States; strengthening climate resilience and supporting the implementation of climate commitments ahead of COP 31; advancing ocean governance and the sustainability of the blue economy; supporting youth empowerment, gender equality, and health systems.

Mr. Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago's participation in CHOGM continues this Government's drive through the astute leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, to develop strong international partnerships globally to make this country stronger, safer, and more prosperous. In this regard, we have made it pellucid that our partnership with the Government and people of the United States of America is of utmost priority. In this vein and in keeping with several high-level visits between officials of both countries to each other's capitals, Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the visit to Port of Spain of Assistant Secretary of State—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers:—in charge of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Juan Pablo Segura on Monday, 16th November 2026. During his visit, Assistant Secretary of State Segura will hold a series of high-level meetings with officials related to cooperation in the areas of homeland security, combating transnational crime, energy, trade, an entrepreneurs' forum, as well as furthering bilateral and

diplomatic consultations.

Mr. Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago is not a fair-weather friend of the United States of America. Our commitment and cooperation reflect that the United States is this country's largest trading partner and the world's largest and most powerful economy.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Sobers: This reality has existed for several decades and will continue to do so for a long time. We therefore welcome Assistant Secretary of State Segura's visit to Trinidad and Tobago and look forward to fruitful discussions. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF STATE ENTERPRISES AND STATE-CONTROLLED INSTITUTIONS

Mr. Speaker: Member for Arouca/Lopinot.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Marvin Gonzales (*Arouca/Lopinot*)**:** Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

> *Whereas* State Enterprises and State-Controlled Institutions manage substantial public assets and resources on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago;
>
> *And whereas* their effective management requires that Boards of Directors discharge their fiduciary responsibilities in accordance with the law;
>
> *And whereas* executive management should be suitably qualified, experienced and competent to effectively manage these State Enterprises and

State Institutions and remain accountable to their respective Boards of Directors;

And whereas recent reported developments within the State Enterprise /Institution Sector have raised public concerns regarding Board appointments, the conduct of executive management and inadequate separation of responsibilities among shareholders, Boards of Directors and executive management; *And whereas* reports of conflicts of interest may undermine public confidence, in State Enterprises and State-Controlled Institutions;

Be it resolved that this House express its concern over the governance of State Enterprises and State-Controlled Institutions;

And be it further resolved that the Government take appropriate measures to strengthen transparency, accountability, competence, institutional independence, adherence to established principles of corporate governance and to ensure that appointments and decisions concerning these institutions protect the public interest.

Mr. Speaker, this Motion that I have the opportunity to present on behalf of my constituents and the people of Trinidad and Tobago is a very critical Motion, Mr. Speaker, that impacts upon the life of every single citizen of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. M. Gonzales: "Dey could say what dey want. Dey could do what dey want to try to muzzle the Opposition." We will come here every single day and every single opportunity, Mr. Speaker, despite their distractions and their obfuscations. We will come here to relentlessly prosecute the matters of governance on behalf of

the people of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. M. Gonzales: This motion is very critical because, according to the budget documents that we would have gone through a short while ago in this Parliament, you might be surprised to know, Mr. Speaker, that in the State Enterprises sector under Transfers to State Enterprises, over $4.4 billion was transferred to state enterprises. And that is outside of statutory authorities like WASA and T&TEC, and statutory authorities where taxpayers' transfers to the statutory authority over $1.5 billion, Mr. Speaker.

2.00 p.m.

That is the reason why, Mr. Speaker, the governance of state enterprises is a critical matter that must concern every single elected Member of Parliament of this House, whether you sit on this side of the House or whether you sit on the other side of the House, Mr. Speaker, because as elected Members, all of us and our constituents are impacted by the governance of state enterprises in Trinidad and Tobago, be it water, electricity, our roads, our health sector, our air sector, the maritime sector, all of these sectors, are governed by state enterprises, where, on an annual basis, we come here in this Parliament and we allocate billions of dollars to ensure their effective and efficient functioning, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as you know, when a government assumes office, one of their roles and responsibilities is to ensure that all of these state enterprises are equipped with boards of directors who are competently qualified to manage all of these state enterprises, because, as I have said in my opening statement, Mr. Speaker, they manage billions of dollars on a yearly basis, and we as elected Members of Parliament, we have to monitor.

Even in this Parliament, Mr. Speaker, as you know, in many joint select committees and other committees of the Parliament, we have the power to summon many of these state enterprises, where we ask questions on behalf of the citizens to make sure that they are efficiently and effectively governed. And where we have identified shortcomings and gaps, Mr. Speaker, we utilize the avenues of joint select committees to make recommendations to ensure that these state enterprises are governed efficiently so that the people of Trinidad and Tobago can benefit from the billions of dollars that we allocate to them on a regular basis, Mr. Speaker. That is the reason why this Motion that we are debating here today is a very critical Motion, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, you would have observed that over the last 18 months, when you look at the state enterprises sector, there are many things that are happening that should concern every single citizen.

Whether you sit on the Government side or whether you sit on the Opposition side, we should be concerned when you look at the evidence in the public domain, Mr. Speaker, for example: in Amplia Communications, we see the firing or the dismissal of a general manager; in Angostura, Mr. Speaker, the firing of a deputy CEO and another Corp Sec; in Caribbean Airlines, the firing of an HR vice-president, the firing of Garvin Medera; in Central Bank, the firing or the dismissal of Dr. Alvin Hilaire; at the EXIMBank of Trinidad and Tobago, the termination of Mr.Navin Dookeran; in First Citizens Bank, the termination of Jason Julien; in First Citizens bank, Karen Darbasie; in First Citizens Bank, Nesha Ramkhalawan, Acting Group Chief Risk Officer.

The Heritage and Stabilisation Board, we have observed movements taking place, Mr. Speaker. Even at the National Agricultural Marketing and Development

Corporation, the firing of that CEO, Ms. Nirmalla Debysingh-Persad; at the National Energy Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Speaker, Dr. Vernon Paltoo, the President; at the National Enterprises Limited, Mr. David Robinson; at National Flour Mills, Mr. Ian Mitchell. Mr. Speaker, even at the NIB, the removal of the Directors, Robin Lewis, Gary Awai, Satie Maniram-Khodai, as well as, Mr. Speaker, the removal or the exit of one Deputy Executive Director, Andy Edwards, and the Executive Director, Mrs. Niala Persad-Poliah, Mr. Speaker, just to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, you would recall that very early in the life of this Parliament, when Dr. Hilaire was removed as the Central Bank Governor, very shortly there was the mass firing or termination of directors and executive management on the Board of the Water and Sewerage Authority. The Opposition, doing its work, filed questions in this Parliament to ask the respective Ministers, the Minister of Public Utilities and the Minister of Finance, as to the circumstances surrounding the termination of these very senior executive officials, Mr. Speaker, and the two Ministers invoked Standing Order 27(1)(g); not to respond to these questions in the public interest. Today we are hearing, Mr. Speaker, that there is an arrangement where Dr. Alvin Hilaire will be compensated millions of dollars for the separation and his termination as the Central Bank Governor.

Mr. Speaker, I can report to you today that the information reaching the Opposition is that the removal and/or the termination of directors and senior management at the Water and Sewerage Authority will cost the taxpayers of this country over $30million in settlements, Mr. Speaker, because they have no basis whatsoever for the termination of these contracts at executive management level.

That is only the Central Bank Governor. That is only the Water and Sewerage Authority.

I could tell you, in many state enterprises all over Trinidad and Tobago, T&TEC and wherever you are seeing movements at the executive level, Mr. Speaker, the information reaching the Opposition is that the taxpayers of this country are exposed well over $500 million that that they will have to pay in compensation for the illegal termination of these officers, Mr. Speaker, and that is the reason why this Motion is very critical before us here today, because when a Government assumes office, we expect the Government, Mr. Speaker, to make changes at the board level to manage state enterprises, but it must concern every single citizen and every law maker, that when you are seeing movements taking place at the executive levels at state enterprises, it begs the question: Who and what coordinated effort is being implemented to remove executive management to all of these state enterprises? Whether that is being done to ensure corrupt or illegal activities, Mr. Speaker, or to facilitate corruption or illegal activities in the state enterprises sector, especially given the fact that the state enterprises sector, they control billions of dollars, Mr. Minister of Finance, billions of dollars.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. M. Gonzales: So, the taxpayers of this country are exposed to the tune of over $500 million, Mr. Speaker, in the settlement of outstanding negotiations and claims that were filed against many of those state enterprises; it is the taxpayers of this country who would have to foot the bill to settle all of these claims, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you would recall that I raised an issue, not only in this Parliament, but in press conferences speaking to the citizens of Trinidad and

Tobago, that in one of those state enterprises that we are talking about, that I have just mentioned here, is the Trinidad and Tobago, TSTT; Telecommunication Services of Trinidad and Tobago, and we saw movements taking place in TSTT. You would expect the Government to replace the Board and appoint new boards of directors, but what concerned us in the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, is when you see some strange movements taking place at the executive level where persons have been recruited via a transparent process, and they have been working inside of TSTT across various administrations, not placed there by members or by the political directorate.

It was very interesting, Mr. Speaker, when Mr. Kent Western, who applied for the job, being an officer within TSTT, who applied for the job, and just one year or months after this Government assumed office, he was removed from the position, and one, Keino Cox was placed in that position without any advertisement or without any transparent process, Mr. Speaker. Shortly after, less than one year, after Mr. Keino Cox assumed the position of Chief Executive Officer of TSTT, it is all kinds of bacchanal and "manima" taking place inside of TSTT, all kinds of confusion.

You are seeing in the public domain where Keino Cox is making all kinds of allegations against TSTT and where TSTT is making all kinds of allegations against Keino Cox, but Keino Cox did not just arrive there in that position. He was placed there by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. He was handpicked by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, and all of the issues of governance and the issues of fiduciary responsibilities, Mr. Speaker, and conflict of interest, the Government must take responsibility, because they took issue and they interfered

in the governance of TSTT, Mr. Speaker, and now we are hearing that Keino Cox, the former CEO of TSTT, is now suing the TSTT for millions of dollars in damages and TSTT is counter-suing.

Mr. Speaker, I raise the issue of a sole-select contract in TSTT to the tune of $49million, a contract that was offered via an open tender process, and someone inside TSTT took the decision to terminate that procurement arrangement and put forward a sole-select tender process to award that contract to one Humming Bird Holdings Ltd to the tune of $49 million via a sole-select contract, Mr. Speaker. I am told that in addition to that, there are arrangements taking place with the former CEO and companies like ANGL Pay Limited, NK Innovatech, Nasc Technologies Ltd, Rex Kar Limited**,** Humming Bird Holdings Ltd, and Nimble Mobile, well affiliated, Mr. Speaker, with a company by the name of WiPay that is well known to some Members of the Government who, from my information, played an instrumental role in the UNC general election campaign of 2025, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Padarath: Mr. Speaker, 48(6).

Mr. Speaker: I think you could rephrase that, so as not to cast—

Mrs. Beckles-Robinson: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: No, no, no. Insofar as your references to WiPay and putting blame at the feet of the Members on that side, rephrase it. You know how to do that.

Mr. M. Gonzales: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I said the UNC. I did not say Members of the Government.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. M. Gonzales: I did not accuse any Member of the Government. I said the UNC. We have heard, Mr. Speaker, we sat in this Parliament, and we are told that

the PNM is engaged in drug trafficking, Mr. Speaker. We are accused of all manner of things, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. M. Gonzales: I am saying here today that I am putting the blame at the UNC. No Member on this side—I am not making any accusations on Members of this side, Mr. Speaker. I am saying, and I will not be disturbed or interrupted—and, Mr. Speaker, I am told that all of these companies are affiliated with one, Keino Cox, and a main director of WiPay that contributed significantly to the 2025 campaign of the UNC.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that I have in my position, a document where the circumstances of that arrangement inside of TSTT will shock this country: An independent investigation that found that, of particular significance, is the finding that Mr. Cox willfully misled the Board in its memorandum dated August the 3rd, 2026, by selectively presenting to the corporate secretary's code of ethics declaration; Mr. Cox appended the first page of the declaration but omitted the second page, Mr. Speaker.

2.15 p.m.

Another finding. The findings concern the moneylender licence application to provide a further and distinct basis for concern. Mr. Cox alleged that the Corporate Secretary had deliberately delayed the application before because of a conflict of interest arising from her directorship at the National Payment and Innovation Company of Trinidad and Tobago.

The evidence further established that the proposed commercial arrangement with Hummingbird—the same company that I raised issues about some months

ago. And the Minister will not respond, and TSTT will not respond—that the evidence further establishes that the proposed commercial arrangement with Hummingbird was subject to procurement requirements identified before the Corporate Secretary became involved in the license application, although a waiver of tender had been prepared and signed off, and the correspondence of August 12, 2026, confirmed that the necessary PDAC approval remained outstanding.

The investigation finds that Mr. Cox's representations concerning the Corporate Secretary were materially and deliberately misleading and unsupported by the contemporaneous evidence, and the seriousness of this conduct extends beyond its effect upon the professional reputation of the Corporate Secretary. Allegations advanced by the Chief Executive Officer against the Corporate Secretary, particularly where they concern alleged conflict of interest. The investigation also finds that Mr. Cox materially misled the Chairman concerning the extent of one Mr. John Outridge's involvement in TSTT's affairs.

The findings concern that the ANGL Pay transaction also demonstrates a serious failure of executive judgment. The Novis transaction raised particularly significant concerns regarding Mr. Cox's exercise of executive authority over substantial financial commitments. TSTT made upfront payments of approximately $5.9 million under a long-term software management arrangement. The findings concerning Nimble and Rex Kar reinforce the broader concerns regarding commercial oversight. The Nimble arrangement involved preferential commercial terms and revenue allocations without an adequately documented business case or corresponding minimum performance obligation. The proposed Rex Kar lease involved a substantial financial commitment amid unresolved

questions concerning the operational requirements of the authority.

Mr. Speaker, I am calling today for a criminal investigation against the former CEO of TSTT and anyone else—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. M. Gonzales:—involved in this litany of scandal, bacchanal and corruption within TSTT because I have said it over and over: all is not well in the Telecommunication Services of Trinidad and Tobago. And I am calling upon the Minister of Public Utilities to invoke his authority under the Constitution and call for a criminal investigation, and if he does not do so, he must take responsibility for it, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. M. Gonzales: That is the reason why this Motion is critical, Mr. Speaker. He must take full responsibility, and whilst he is at that, I want to ask him to look into the dealings of one director, Mr. Randy Ramtahal, who I am told is very much aware of the sole select contract arrangement to the tune of $49 million to Hummingbird.

Hon. Members: Wow!

Mr. M. Gonzales: Find out from Mr. Ramtahal what his involvement was in this, and whilst the investigation is taking place, remove him. And those who have responsibility in this travesty within the TSTT, Mr. Speaker, they must be removed completely from inside of there in order to protect the public interest and I intend to say much more on that on a PNM platform, Mr. Speaker. It is ridiculous.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. M. Gonzales: Mr. Speaker, let me now turn to the National Payment and

Innovation Company. I call upon the Minister of Finance to tell us why the National Payment and Innovation Company of Trinidad and Tobago entered into a 10-year contract with WiPay to the tune of $4.4 billion without any procurement process. A sole select contract, Mr. Speaker. A 10-year contract from 2025 to 2035, where WiPay is now suing the National Payment and Innovation Company to the tune of $4.4 billion, Mr. Speaker. The Ministry of Finance came out in defence of that claim and said that they are going to defend it because it was tendered, or the contract was offered or signed, under improper procurement processes, Mr. Speaker. The taxpayers of this country, they now face a whopping bill of $4.4 billion because when this was entered into with WePay and the National Payment Company of Trinidad and Tobago, guess what? There was no board in place.

Hon. Member: What?

Mr. M. Gonzales: A company that was formed with an acting Chief Executive Officer in place, with some employees, former employees of WiPay, stacked within the National Payment Company. And somehow a 10-year arrangement was secured without a board, Mr. Speaker, to the tune of $4.4 billion and up to now we have not heard from the Minister of Finance as well as the Minister of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development. I call upon the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development to tell us why the taxpayers of this country now have to face a bill of $4.4 million for a contract allegedly entered into with WePay from 2025 to 2035 to the tune of $4.4 billion without a board in place.

And whilst all of that is happening, the same WiPay company got

themselves involved in arrangements with TSTT, with PTSC, with UTC, with NLCB, all of these state enterprises, Mr. Speaker. The National Payment and Innovation Company entered into agreements with all of these state enterprises and WiPay to provide payment innovation services, and we are told that WiPay is now suing the state for $4.4 billion. And not a word from the Minister of Finance. And not a word from the Minister of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development. And that is the reason why I asked a short while ago what role did WiPay play in the election campaign of 2025 [*inaudible*]? What role did it play?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. M. Gonzales: Mr. Speaker, I want to bring to the country's attention, to your attention, a very sensitive matter that offended me dearly. You see, Mr. Speaker, state enterprises—because you see they appointed many boards, over 145 boards in the state enterprises sector, many boards. But many of them are very uncomfortable with what is taking place around them, and they are now coming to the PNM for their refuge and their protection because they know things are not happening in the way that they expected them to, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. M. Gonzales: Mr. Speaker, I received a document from a member of the board of TTT. He came to me, and he showed me a document dated December 23, 2025, where an internal auditor was dismissed or summarily dismissed on allegations of sexual misconduct. A tribunal was held, and the senior internal auditor was called before a tribunal and was found guilty of sexual misconduct and other misconduct within TSTT, and I read an excerpt of the letter.

"Termination of employment.

> I refer to the findings and the conclusion set out in the tribunal report dated December 22, 2025, a copy of which is attached for your information. This report emanated from a disciplinary hearing that was held on December 16, 2025 and in accordance with the tribunal's determination, the board of TTT has taken decision to terminate your employment with TTT Limited with immediate effect, and this termination is summary in nature and takes effect as of the date of this letter, 23rd of December 2025."

And the senior auditor had to leave that organization because he was found guilty of misconduct and sexual misconduct within that organization.

I am reporting to the Parliament and the people of Trinidad and Tobago that six months after that internal auditor was found guilty by an independent tribunal and having been served with a termination notice to move from the organization, instructions came from the Office of the Prime Minister for that internal auditor to resume duties with immediate effect.

Hon. Members: Wow! Amazing.

Mr. M. Gonzales: And that internal auditor, after being summarily dismissed on serious allegations of sexual misconduct, is now back on the staff of TTT Limited.

Hon. Member: Unbelievable.

Mr. M. Gonzales: And I am asking myself, "How are the females and the women working in TTT Limited feeling today, Mr. Speaker?" How are they feeling today? And if we do not get, and we cannot get, an answer to this very serious issue, I am calling for the immediate resignation of the board of TTT Limited for allowing this travesty to take place and not protect women and girls at TTT Limited, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. M. Gonzales: It is a travesty, and we must not allow this to happen in this country, Mr. Speaker. We must not allow that to happen, and if he is in fact back on the staff of TTT Limited, he must be removed forthwith. And I am calling upon the Office of the Prime Minister, if any Minister that exists there knows about this matter, he must intervene and explain to the people and the taxpayers of this country why they allowed this travesty to take place. It must all hang around their necks, Mr. Speaker, in collective shame. It does not represent us.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. M. Gonzales: Mr. Speaker, I now turn my attention to the NCRHA because I want to start by reminding some of the younger Members of Parliament that some years ago there was a company by the name of EFCL. EFCL was a company under the Ministry of Education, and EFCL was known to be a place where, I would say, like a former Prime Minister, "a den of iniquity" was taking place inside of there.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. M. Gonzales: A procurement iniquity inside of there, Mr. Speaker. And I want to read a report from the *Guardian* dated November 13th, especially for my younger colleagues on both sides, that:

> "A secret contract millhouse was discovered at...EFCL in Maraval, and armed guards have been called in to secure a mountain of potentially damning evidence which points to the illegal manufacturing of backdated tender documents worth hundreds of millions of dollars." —This— "...discovery was made one day after the new board of the state-owned

company suspended its Chief Executive Officer Kiran Shah and Chief Operating Officer Sharma Maharaj over claims of impropriety."

Mr. Speaker, it gets even more interesting because the reports will show that EFCL conducted an investigation using PricewaterhouseCoopers and other auditing firms, and they confirmed illegal arrangements within EFCL that resulted in the firing of senior executive officers. And those fired—I am reading from a June 8, 2016, document. Those fired on Monday were:

- Veda Ramnath, a manager of procurement;
- Ria Narinesingh, a divisional manager of finance;
- Frank Mahabir, manager of maintenance and repairs;
- Surendra Balgobin, manager of secondary schools; and
- Deva Sharma, a manager of implementation.

Having been found guilty by an independent auditing company, these five managers were removed from EFCL. They were fired from EFCL, Mr. Speaker. And guess who the line Minister of EFCL was?

Hon. Member: Who?

Mr. M. Gonzales: One Tim Gopeesingh. Tim Gopeesingh, when this Government came into office, was appointed as the NCRHA Chair. As soon as Dr. Gopeesingh was appointed the Chair of the NCRHA, I am told that the entire executive of the NCRHA was completely gutted and they were removed from office, Mr. Speaker.

2.30 p.m.

The third floor of one building 35, I am told, Mr. Speaker, they removed all of the executive management of the NCRHA, and guess what, Mr. Speaker? The

same officers who were fired from EFCL, and who were found to be responsible and guilty for procurement breaches inside of the EFCL; you know what Tim Gopeesingh did?He took all of them back. He removed the executive management of the NCRHA.

And what is even more interesting is that the same Veda Ramnath, the same Veda Ramnath who was head of procurement in EFCL, where all of this bacchanal took place, and who was found to be guilty for being involved in this, guess what? Tim Gopeesingh fired the contract manager in the NCRHA, and guess what? He put the same Veda Ramnath in charge of procurement inside of the NCRHA. I am told that many of these officers who were involved in illegal activities inside of EFCL, they are now stacking all of them inside of the North Central Regional Health Authority to do the bidding of some of them inside of the NCRHA.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you this. On August 27th, shortly after the general election, a memorandum was written by the Manager of Procurement to the CEO of the NCRHA.

> In a meeting held on Monday 25th, 2025, an instruction was given by the Chairman of the Board, Mr. Tim Gopeesingh, to the Manager of Procurement stating any procurement activity over the value of $75,000 must first pass through him for his approval of small-scale, simplified procurement.
>
> Kindly be advised, I am unable to follow this instruction…

The Manager of Procurement is telling the Chairman that.

> I am unable to follow this instruction as this is a direct violation of the proclaimed Procurement Act. This violation can be cited in the general

guidelines for the framework of internal control for procurement.

Mr. Speaker, in another correspondence dated August 27th, via a letter to the same Tim Gopeesingh:

> Reference is made to the meeting held on Monday 25th, at which the Chairman of the NCRHA directed that all procurement over $75,000 required the approval and the non-objection…

—not of the Board, but of the Chairman. And:

> Please be made aware that the Manager of Public Procurement of the NCRHA has validly raised issue with the directive, indicating that this is in direct violation of the proclaimed procurement Act of Trinidad and Tobago.
>
> This violation can be cited in the general guidelines for the framework of internal control for procurement, which states that the Board is not permitted to interfere with the day-to-day operations of the Public Procurement Department.

Mr. Speaker, those are documents written by executive management to the Chairman of the NCRHA, Dr. Tim Gopeesingh, Mr. Speaker, raising serious complaints and red flags about his conduct inside of the NCRHA. And guess what? He fired all of them, including the Manager of Procurement. And he stacked that department with managers who were once involved in illegal activities under the Educational Facilities Management Company.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. M. Gonzales: Mr. Speaker, I am told that the Chairman, Mr. Tim Gopeesingh, is now under investigation by the OPR for his conduct in the NCRHA. And in addition to that, I am calling for a criminal investigation. I am

calling for an investigation by the Office of the Attorney General on the conduct of the Chairman of the NCRHA, Mr. Speaker, because the manner in which he conducts himself in the NCRHA, it puts in jeopardy the taxpayers of this country, the people who rely on the NCRHA, Mr. Speaker, for their lives, to go to that institution, Mr. Speaker, to attend to their daily activities, for their health concerns, Mr. Speaker. The way in which the NCRHA is being conducted, Mr. Speaker, I am calling for an investigation by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and by the Attorney General, because, Mr. Speaker, these matters should concern all of us. Mr. Speaker, can I ask you, how much time do I have remaining?

Mr. Speaker: Five and a half minutes.

Mr. M. Gonzales: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, before I end, I want to put on the record a document. Because if the Government had done its due diligence, they would not have put Mr. Tim Gopeesingh as Chairman of the Board of the NCRHA. I received a document dated the 16th of October, written to one Dr. Colin Furlonge, Medical Chief of Staff of the General Hospital of Port of Spain. And hear this letter, and had the Government done its due diligence, it would not have put some of these people in state enterprises to jeopardize the interests of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. M. Gonzales:

Dear Mr. Furlonge

Letter from Professor S. Ramsawak

Re: Dr. Tim Gopeesingh

I wish to register the department's reservation about having Dr. Tim

> Gopeesingh work at our institution as an honorary consultant in charge of a clinical unit. His work record over the past revealed years at Mount Hope Women's Hospital which indicates that he is almost never there for his obstetric clinic, his gynaecology clinic, elective gynaecology, surgery list, and does not do ward rounds with his unit.
>
> It is my view that his pattern of behaviour is not likely to change, so that while we may expect him to teach the medical students, his service to this institution will be at best minimal.
>
> Yours respectfully
>
> Dr. Persad

Mr. Speaker, this tells you that in the very first place, you have someone chairing the NCRHA that is unfit for purpose, and that his conduct, based on what we have seen over the last couple of months, continues to jeopardize the interests of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, this Motion is critical, because it calls upon the Government to take responsibility and to manage our state enterprises in a way that our interests will be preserved. Because so far, we have instability taking place, we have chaos taking place, we have scandal taking place in the state enterprises sector, and they should all hold their head in collective shame, Mr. Speaker. And we will defend the people of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Speaker. And we will ensure that every opportunity that we have, we will expose all of the mismanagement, all of the corruption, in the state enterprises sector, Mr. Speaker. And we will take this opportunity to prosecute this at every level, Mr. Speaker. And Mr. Speaker, with those few rules, in case you do not hear, or anyone hears, I

beg to move. I beg to move. I beg to move. I beg to move.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: I do not want to be caught with respect to seconding the Motion. So I wish to second the Motion, Mr. Speaker, whenever you are ready.

Mr. Speaker: I am very happy.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: I am very happy that both you and the Member for Arouca/Lopinot have corrected your errant ways.

Hon. Members, the Motion having been seconded by the Member for Diego Martin North/East—

Mr. Imbert: And I also reserve my right to speak, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: "You know it too late for that."

Hon. Members: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: "No, no, I already start to talk, you know. We go deal with that at the appropriate time. We go deal with that procedurally at the appropriate time."

I shall now propose the question for debate.

Question proposed.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the Motion. I reserve my right to speak.

Mr. Padarath: You have already spoken.

Mr. Imbert: I am seconding it now and I reserve my right to speak.

Mr. Speaker: Hold on, hold on. I told you we will deal with that at the appropriate time. What I have done is that I have put the question. You cannot

second the Motion after I put the question. The only thing that qualifies me to put the question is when the Motion is seconded. The electronic record will bear me out, you know.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, could I get clarification? Will I be allowed to speak on this Motion?

Mr. Speaker: I told you we will deal with that at the appropriate time.

Mr. Imbert: Will I be allowed to speak on this Motion?

Mr. Speaker: I am not inclined to answer that at this moment, but we will deal with that at the appropriate time. The Member—

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Have a seat.

Mr. Imbert: So you are not allowing me to speak?

Mr. Speaker: I never said so. Please. I never said so. I told you, having seconded the Motion, and at the time when I started to speak, you belatedly reserve your right to speak. The Standing Orders are clear. We will deal with that at the appropriate time. We will deal with that at the appropriate time, but I think the Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Hon. Members: [*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. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when one sees a Motion crafted in the way the Member for Arouca/Lopinot would have submitted it into this House, that deals with state enterprises and state-controlled institutions, you expected a bombshell. You expected some big exposé of corruption. You expected that you would have heard

about mismanagement, loss of public moneys. You would have expected thievery. You have heard nothing of that, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: The Member piloted this Motion. We are now about 19 months into Government, and not a single one of them could point to any Minister of this Government, led by the Member for Siparia, in any corruption, any corruption. You see, Mr. Speaker, in 10 years, they have "tiefed". They stole money from the Treasury of Trinidad and Tobago for their political institutions. That is why today they have to answer to the courthouse how they were able to build the Balisier House.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: They must answer whether they used state-controlled institutions and state enterprises to fund the Balisier House. That is what they must answer.

Mr. Marcelle: Mr. Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 49(1). This matter is an active and live matter before the High Court of Trinidad and Tobago, and we ought not to be discussing this matter which is before the High Court.

Mr. Speaker: Standing Order 49(1) is the sub judice Standing Order you are relying on? All right, I will ask you to revisit the rules on sub judice. Just have recourse to the *McGee*, which is the best exposition on the sub judice rule in all the parliamentary proceedings books. I am sure you have recourse to the *McGee*.

Member, just tread very carefully. Because at the end of the day, the sub judice rule carries less importance where it is a non-jury question. That is all I am prepared to say because I do not want to take up—Member for Laventille West, can I just invite you to read the *McGee* on the sub judice rule? It is very

thoroughly explained therein. Thank you.

Hon. S. Hosein: Mr. Speaker, I intend to go no further than that, except to say my friends will have to explain to the courthouse what they did with public money.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: It is a simple matter. It is a very simple matter.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Member and one more thing that he spent, I think, what, 10 years as a Minister of Government?—five years as a Minister of Government. His career started as a police officer. Then I believe he became an attorney-at-law. And then the Member made such a ridiculous submission that somehow an auditor or an audit committee could find somebody guilty. He said that some audit report found people guilty in EFCL. EFCL was closed down. I do not know if they are in Court of Appeal right now being wound up by the last administration. And that is all he could have spoken about because they have nothing that he could accuse his Government of, Mr. Speaker. That they are pulling back all of these matters from all records to try to somehow find that there is some wrongdoing by this administration.

2.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I want to get to another submission he made. He said he is calling on the Attorney General to launch a criminal investigation into the Chairman of the NCRHA. Does he know that the Attorney General is only involved in civil proceedings? Civil proceedings, you know. That is a fundamental matter. I see my colleague from Toco/Sangre Grande laughing. Because if you want to ask for a criminal investigation, the bare minimum is that, "go by de right person, nah". Go by the right person. Go by the right person to launch the

investigation. But he had "all kind ah ting" to say about Dr. Gopeesingh, who cannot defend himself in this House. But why does he not talk about what Davlin Thomas was doing at the NCRHA under their administration?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: "That, instead of fixing up de hospital, dey was building ah swimming pool at de back ah de hospital. I doh know for who to swim." Maybe it had a private home there.

Hon. Member: With a red couch.

Hon. S. Hosein: I hope it had no red couches there. But they had a swimming pool. Then I think they started up some projects to plant and "all kind ah ting". They were paying excessive overtime at that institution. Today, if you walk through the emergency room at the Eric Williams Medical facility, it has transformed under the leadership of Dr. Tim Gopeesingh.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: I am told that you have operating theatres working nonstop now, Mr. Speaker. You have, I think, 15,000 surgeries that were completed in the last 19 months.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: "You all doh like to hear de facts." But those are the things that are being published. Those are the facts that we have on this side, Mr. Speaker, to inform the public that when they voted for the UNC in April last year, they voted for change—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein:—they voted for good governance, and they voted for a Prime

Minister who cares for the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Then, they come up with these ridiculous numbers, Mr. Speaker. The Member said that we have exposed the taxpayers to $500 million worth of liability because we are firing people in executive positions and so on. Now, I am surprised. "Where he get $500 million from?" Who calculated this? Who was fired? What were the compensation packages? Where did you get $500 million from? And they want to govern this country? They are making up numbers just like how they were hiring ghosts.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Just like how they were hiring ghosts. But he spoke a lot about—what—WiPay and so on. Now, that is not my portfolio. I cannot get involved in those matters. But I want to remind the Member of one particular person who was involved in WiPay. Do you know that when you pull the company records for this WiPay company, you know there was one called Michael Quamina?

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Michael Quamina was a director of WiPay up until 2019, you know. That man has heritage in WiPay. Michael Quamina, he was the private, personal attorney for the former, former Prime Minister, Dr. Rowley. "Dat man get ah parcel of land" on Monos Island a few days before the general election for $2,200 per month—

Mr. Lee: In Turtle Bay.

Hon. S. Hosein:—on Turtle Bay, and they have the gall to come today to accuse this Government of corruption and wrongdoing?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Man, you all have no shame on that side. You all have no shame. Then he talked about NAMDEVCO and how we fired the CEO in NAMDEVCO and so on. Why does the Member not tell this Chamber or tell this country that a few days before the general election, the former Minister of Agriculture had an advisor, who he told, "Fire yuh wuk as the advisor". "You are going as the Deputy CEO of the NAMDEVCO." Right before the general election. So, you know, what they were doing? They were padding all of these state institutions with their political friends, families and financiers, so that if a government has changed, you understand they would be frustrating the work of the new government. The Prime Minister said, Mr. Speaker, that the last time she was too nice. "It have no fake bad man dis time. It ha' real bad man dis time, Mr. Speaker."

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: "It ha' real bad man." Because we are not playing games with the Opposition and their trickery, Mr. Speaker, and their evil tactics. If we see wrongdoing, we will get rid of wrongdoing on this government side, Mr. Speaker. If we see it.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: So, when my friends complain that persons are leaving state institutions, they must ask themselves the identity of those persons and if they are very familiar with those people. Imagine this Member is talking about TSTT. He is talking about TSTT. When they acquired Amplia for $245 million, you had a former, former Prime Minister, Rowley and a former Minister of Finance who was corporation sole, who said "dey doh know nothing about dat".

Dr. Moonilal: Two hundred and—how much?

Hon. S. Hosein: Mr. Speaker, $245 million. Do you know who was in TSTT at that time? One fella called Emile Elias. When the Member for Arouca/Lopinot was talking about people on sex offences, charges and so on, he must talk about Emile Elias, who was appointed by your government, who is before the court for sexually grooming minors.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Charged. When you had a former Minister of Sport, "I doh know where he hand reach", but the taxpayers had to dip into the Treasury to pay for his dirty, grubby hands.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Yes. Today, this Member has the gall to come and accuse us of wrongdoing? I wish if saying going to hell would be parliamentary.

Ms. John: But you could still say it.

Hon. S. Hosein: But I could still say it. Mr. Speaker, I see the Member tried. He tried to audition today. He tried to audition. Because they have a leadership crisis on that side. But my friend from Oropouche East lent me a book. The book is called *Ungovernable: The Political Diaries of a Chief Whip* by Simon Hart. There is a quote in this book; it says:

> Proximity to power deludes some into thinking that they wield it.

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

Hon. S. Hosein: So, because the Member for Arouca/Lopinot sits next to the Member for Arima, he is delusional that one day he will sit in that chair that Arima is sitting on. He is delusional. But I want to warn the Member for Arima that the

Member "set she up once already". "Doh take set up from de Member for Arouca/Lopinot. Doh take bait from him."

Mr. Speaker, we have countlessly reported to the people of Trinidad and Tobago with what was taking place under their watch with CEPEP, with URP, with Reforestation. Some of my colleagues opposite were beneficiaries of CEPEP contracts. They were beneficiaries of HDC contracts. They were beneficiaries of HDC houses. They were beneficiaries, and their families, friends and financiers were beneficiaries of state contracts, where I think one Member, "bredda, fada, everybody have ah company and fixing all de school in she constituency". "All de school." It has one of them who is sitting in the Senate. I do not know why this Member is being protected by the Member for Arima, that she decided to keep him in the Senate, when there are serious, serious matters. Even some of them on that side want him out. "Everybody know who I talking 'bout, you know. The Member, I doh know if he coming or he going."

Mr. Sturge: "He comings."

Dr. Moonilal: "He fostering himself."

Hon. S. Hosein: "He comings?" This Member, the Member for Couva South, in the budget response, indicated to the country that there was a ring of contractors at the MTS, and how much did he—

Mr. Padarath: Half a billion.

Hon. S. Hosein:—half a billion dollars worth of contracts racked up.

Mr. Sturge: "B-b-billion."

Hon. S. Hosein: "B-b-billion"; $500million worth of contracts in one state enterprise and today he is being protected by my colleagues opposite. Why?

"Imagine yuh fire John-Bates but yuh cah fire Cummings." Imagine that.

Ms. John: "Yuh fire John-Bates but yuh cah fire Faris."

Hon. S. Hosein: Imagine Faris—Sen. Al-Rawi, sorry—family were the beneficiaries of $23 million worth of contracts. Imagine NCB Global Finance racked up, I believe—what—$10 billion worth of state contracts in this country and you all have the gall to file this Motion here today? Man, this is one of the greatest political mistakes that you have made as an Opposition.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: But, Mr. Speaker, I like to introduce new matters into this Parliament. I spoke of matters under my Ministry in terms of what they were doing with state lands. How they were giving out state lands. They were giving away the heritage of this country. There is another state enterprise in which I also sit as a Minister, which is the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. This state enterprise has now moved to the Ministry of Finance. In my possession, Mr. Speaker—Mr. Speaker, may I ask how much time again do I have?

Mr. Speaker: I think you have 15 minutes of regular time. So, your regular time expires at 3.11. If you want your additional, it will be 3.26.

Hon. S. Hosein: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I have in my possession a report for the Agricultural Development Bank. It is a forensic investigation commissioned by PricewaterhouseCoopers dated the 6th of August, 2023. In this report, Mr. Speaker, PwC conducted an audit into some of the loans that were given out by this institution. For the avoidance of doubt, this was one of the state-controlled institutions under my colleagues opposite. The key findings of the report state, as follows:

We independently selected 68 loan files for examination. Based on our examination, the 68 loan files and interviews conducted to date, we noted several issues that deviated from the aforementioned credit policy, agri-marketing loan guidelines and proper lending practice.

1. There was no evidence of validation or due diligence of documents submitted by customers, such as photos of produce, market stalls, site visits, to verify agricultural activities claimed by customers.

   Apparently, fabricated documents in loan files for approved loans, such as marketing and NAMDEVCO letters.

   Inadequate assessment of customer credit history and the ability to service loans specifically relating to customers who are gainfully employed but indicate they operate on a full-time basis.

   There was no evidence that the working capital cost build-up included in the loan appraisal report were validated to confirm the total cost of activities.

The document goes on to say that:

> Findings from our subcontracted forensic document examiner regarding 11 loan files with suspected forged documents, such as buyer and supplier letters, as well as receipts, confirmed they were likely forgeries, where the same person prepared the documents for more than one customer. The FD also confirmed that there were similarities and common characteristics among handwriting and signatures in customer documents.

Mr. Speaker, it goes even further. It says that:

> Evidence of customers' use of funds appears to be fabricated.

I want to ask my colleagues opposite if they know any of the beneficiaries of any of these loans by the ADB. I want to ask them that. I want to ask them whether or not loans were given to persons with criminal records. I want to ask them if loans were given to persons who were members of their party groups and were activists campaigning and canvassing with the People's National Movement. I want to ask them that.

You see, Mr. Speaker, to put all of that in a nutshell, this is what was happening. Persons were applying for loans at the ADB, presenting to the ADB false, unverified or even forged documents. Therefore, moneys were being advanced to these persons, not for any agricultural purpose, but it may have been for criminal purposes. It may have been for other purposes. But they were misappropriating funds given to them by the Agricultural Development Bank. Because everybody knows the mandate of the ADB is to lend money to small farmers, to agro-processors to diversify the economy, to encourage farming, to encourage agriculture, to assist with food security. But these persons, Mr. Speaker, were in fact not doing that. They were forging documents—forging farmers' badges and so on, to get documents.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, there was one that stood out to me: that a person used a personal motor vehicle—I am not going to disclose the person's name. The person used a personal motor vehicle as the collateral for the loan. Checks on the file revealed that no certified copy was annexed to the file, and no evaluation report for the value of the collateral was on the file. That person was advanced a loan of close to about $200,000. That is just one instance.

There are 68 loans, Mr. Speaker, amounting to millions of dollars that were

dispersed by the previous ADB administration. Mr. Speaker, when you see what was happening here, the total amount of loans issued for this period now shows that in the north branch at that date, the arrears come up to $4.7 million. The total value of new loans that are in arrears is $35.5 million. So, what was happening was the ADB was being used as a slush fund to give away money for some of the People's National Movement members. So, when genuine farmers go to apply for loans, "dey cah get it". "But ah man who did not even provide ah certified copy for ah vehicle to hold as security, getting loan. Getting loan." That is what you call for a criminal investigation.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: That is what you should call as a criminal investigation. That is what we should call as for a criminal investigation.

You see, my friends opposite, their memory is so bad. Just imagine Petrotrin, another one. We know why they closed down Petrotrin. Petrotrin was closed down not because of their narrative of haemorrhaging and so on, you know, because that was earning foreign exchange for the country. It was to protect a man called Malcolm Jones. You all know Malcolm Jones? It was to protect him. The Privy Council, Mr. Speaker, had something to say about this Malcolm Jones fella. I will tell you what the Privy Council had to say about him. You see, Mr. Speaker, my friends opposite, again, they are so forgetful that we must remind them.

There was a claim filed, Privy Council Appeal 47 of 2018, *Maharaj v. Petrotrin*. This judgment was handed down on 20th of May, 2019. It is very important that one goes through the history of this matter. So, everybody knows about Malcolm Jones and the failed World GTL plant, which cost this country, I

believe, $1 billion. In fact, you could see the remnants of it on the Petrotrin compound, and so on. There were arbitration proceedings between Petrotrin and World GTL, and so on. There was this principal called Malcolm Jones, who everybody knows is a PNM. I think it is a factual thing to say now that he is a PNM. Mr. Jones was appointed to the Cabinet Standing Committee on Energy. But before the Government changed in 2015, the previous administration would have filed a claim against Mr. Malcolm Jones for breach of fiduciary duty and so on.

Mr. Jones was appointed to the Cabinet Standing Committee on Energy on the 8th of October, 2015. On the 8th and the 9th of October, 2015, the then Minister of Communication reported as saying that he thought that the claim against Mr. Malcolm Jones was heading in a direction to be dropped, to withdraw. Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that the opinion to withdraw the case against Malcolm Jones came after the announcement by the Minister of Communication? The Minister made the announcement when? On the 8th of October, 2015. The man was appointed on the Energy Committee on the 8th of October, 2015, but on the 11th of October, 2015, the legal opinion was done by one Vincent Nelson, advising the then administration to withdraw the case against Malcolm Jones.

Do you know what the Privy Council had to say about this, Mr. Speaker? This is not the UNC. This is not Barataria/San Juan saying this. This is the Privy Council commenting on the withdrawal of that claim against Mr. Malcolm Jones, at paragraph 47 of the judgment. It says:

> "…it appears to the Board that as the available evidence stands at the moment, there are some grounds for thinking that the decision to abandon the

> claim against…"—Malcolm—"…Jones may have been influenced by political factors. This is in…"—the—"…view of the comments reportedly made by a government minister on 8 and 9 October 2015, in advance of the receipt of the written advice of 11 October 2015 from Mr. Nelson QC, indicating that the claim against…"—Malcolm—"…Jones was likely to be abandoned; the very summary and tentative consideration given to the merits of the claim against Mr. Jones in that written advice…on the basis of which Petrotrin seems to have been willing to abandon the claim without further review; and the appearance of involvement of the Attorney General in taking that decision."

You see how they have embarrassed this country just to protect their friends, their family and financiers?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Imagine the highest court of this country—

Mr. Lee: What is the date on the Privy Council— [*Inaudible*]?

Hon. S. Hosein:—the Privy Council decision was dated in 2019—had to tell this—tell the world, in fact, that they withdrew a case against a man who happened to be their friend. They had no basis for withdrawing the case. They announced that they were withdrawing the case even before they got the legal advice to so withdraw the case, and today have the gall to come and talk to us about corruption in state-controlled institutions? "Man, dog eat allyuh shame on dat side."

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: "Dog eat allyuh shame." You all have embarrassed this country. You all have shut down Petrotrin to protect Malcolm Jones. Withdrew a billion-

dollar claim against this man, why? They did not do it against Malcolm Jones only, you know. "Allyuh remember it have ah fella called Ken Julien?" They did the same thing with Ken Julien. "If allyuh want to go back in history, I could go back there too." Because under them, they had the e Teck Board. They awarded a contract for US $5 million to one Bamboo Investments and "we cah not get ah dollar or ah dinner mint for dat US $5 million". "People take yuh money and gone. Dey rip allyuh off." I understand why people could rip them off, you know.

I remember, right, a former, former Prime Minister, he took a trip to the—I do not know where he went. "He always flying." He came back in the airport, Mr. Speaker. He raised up his phone. He said Bill Gates sent him an offer for money.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. S. Hosein: He said, "Look, I have de text on meh phone". "Bill Gates offering money." Right. He said Bill Gates was offering them money. "Da'is somebody sending some kind ah spam text on your phone, Mr. Speaker, telling yuh yuh win de lottery. De man believed dis ting", that he came back—he said he is so happy. "Look, Bill Gates talk to meh on de phone. He offered meh money. He offered Trinidad and Tobago money." "Dat is when yuh spend too much time on de golf course and not enough time in yuh office." That is what happens.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: That is what happens. But my friends opposite, they must know the kind of Motions that they have to bring. Look, for example, in the Attorney General's office—

Mr. Speaker: Before you get on with it, I take it you want your 15 minutes.

Hon. S. Hosein: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Mr. Speaker, look what is happening. Imagine, when you look at what they were doing at the Attorney General's office, in terms of giving the legal briefs to their friends, families and financiers, they were spending $40 million on political witch hunts in this country, paying one SRP Kate. Anybody remembers SRP Kate? This is a lawyer who was doing family cases and divorces. "Basically, when de husband hiding money, they used to hire her to trace the assets to find out where de husband hiding money", so when there is a divorce application in the court, the court could make the appropriate order for the division of the assets. These people go and hire this lady to run down their political opponents, Mr. Speaker, to somehow come up with claims to file against them. That is what they were doing. Paid this lady, what, $40 million in legal fees. That is just in the TTPS alone. That is outside of the fees that were paid through the Attorney General's office in terms of that.

Under my watch, Mr. Speaker, EMBDC, again, political witch hunt, spent over $200 million in legal fees. Mr. Speaker, $200 million in legal fees, based on records and checks that we have done at the EMBDC. Today, they cannot recover one cent. Under the astute management of that company, Mr. Speaker, we saved this country $24 million recently on a claim that was filed against the EMBDC.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Mr. Speaker, $24 million. Because what they were doing on that side, Mr. Speaker, is that they were using that EMBDC company as a law firm. Because, you know, the lawyers who they were hiring? One Jason Mootoo. Everybody knows who Jason Mootoo is. Right. That is who he was. Everybody

knows that is one of their favourite attorneys, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at other matters involving their management, in terms of state enterprises, I spoke of some of the ills, Mr. Speaker. We could speak of some of the good. Minister Morris in the Office of the Prime Minister, who has direct oversight over TTT, Mr. Speaker, has revived the TTT, that you are now seeing a higher viewership of TTT.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: That is a state-controlled enterprise. Where you have a much more diverse level of programming, rather than the PNM hiring TTT and refusing to pay them. You all used to rent out the NAPA for conventions, and so on, and are still owing Minister Benjamin money through the NAPA and the SAPA. You all know that. You have the Member for Couva South, the Minister of Public Utilities, fixing thousands of street lights in this country.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: You have their water services increased, Mr. Speaker. You have schools being repaired on time and opened when school is opened, Mr. Speaker. Every single school was opened on time, Mr. Speaker. Every, single school. Well, the Minister of Finance, he is corporation sole. He has all of the state enterprises as shareholders.

But, Mr. Speaker, you are seeing that what this Government is doing under the leadership of the Prime Minister is that we have continuously over the years spent money, every year millions of dollars, in defunct state enterprises. Now we are cleaning up that mess, Mr. Speaker, to properly wind up those companies and save the taxpayers money, so you will get more beds at the hospital, more

medication, and children will get their laptops, Mr. Speaker. That is what we are doing. We are not engaged in waste and mismanagement.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Under the Minister of Works and Infrastructure, you have several state enterprises there, Mr. Speaker. One in particular that is nonfunctional, it is not generating enough profit, which is the National Quarries and the Prime Minister has agreed that we are going to divest that asset.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Why are we continuously spending money and throwing millions of dollars behind those companies? You have the Magdalena, you have the Hilton and so on. All of those expressions of interest have gone out. It will be a fair, open, transparent procedure, Mr. Speaker. Fair, open and transparent.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. S. Hosein: You have my colleague from Oropouche East through the Heritage company. You have now seen an increase in production levels.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: If I am not mistaken, we will have gas in 2027 in Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Speaker. The HDC is going out to build homes under the Member for Caroni Central, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

3.15 p.m.

My colleague from St. Augustine, through the RDC, instead of Ministers giving their personal friends and maybe boyfriends contracts, Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Member: Ooooh.

Hon. S. Hosein:—the RDC will be now returning to its mandate and the Member has, in fact, been performing and you will see three new corporations going to be established under again the leadership of the Member for Siparia.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: My colleague, Minister Roger Alexander, the Member for Tunapuna, you have seen homicides at its lowest ever in the last 10 years, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: You have my colleague, Mr. Devesh Maharaj, who is working on having trials within a reasonable time in this country, and therefore, we do not have to spend money in the prison, Mr. Speaker, housing persons there for 10, 12, 15 years waiting for a trial. Those days will be over, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: I congratulate the Minister of Defence also working very hard, Mr. Speaker, and right now he is managing that situation very carefully with respect to the tragedy that happened over the weekend. My colleague from Oropouche West, the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker—you have the Minister of Health having those RHAs up and running.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: You now have systems being delivered to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We have seen the opening of the Couva Children's Hospital—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein:—after my friends had closed that institution, and it took a pandemic for them to open it. That is "wickedity" at its highest, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: They are hypocrites of the highest order, Mr. Speaker. Hypocrites of the highest order. The Member for San Fernando West—finally, we have an MP for San Fernando West, the Minister of Education.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Every single Form 1 student has received a laptop, Mr. Speaker, under the direction being given by the Prime Minister.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: You also have Minister Watts, the Minister of Sport, Mr. Speaker, who has now said no more corruption in SporTT. SporTT will be going back to its moorings of ensuring, Mr. Speaker, training for the young people of Trinidad and Tobago. We would have athletes in this country, Mr. Speaker, of the highest quality. We have so much work and working Ministers in this Government, Mr. Speaker, that my friends opposite cannot point any corruption to any single one of us. They have failed as an Opposition. They have failed as a political party, and they have failed this country.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: Imagine the law enforcement agencies of this country, under the direction of the national security apparatus of this country, has said that we are going to take stringent measures on a particular area of Trinidad and Tobago. They have protested against that, Mr. Speaker. Every time we bring legislation for oversight, every time we bring legislation in this Parliament to fight crime, they are fighting with the criminals, not against the criminals, Mr. Speaker. That is what they are doing. We will not stand for that. We will not stand for that, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: The Prime Minister has said, and I repeat it again: She was too nice last time, Mr. Speaker. She was too nice. That is why you are seeing the results of this Government working. The state institutions, Mr. Speaker, they are working, they have their reporting to do to the Minister of Finance in terms of corporation sole. We have competent people appointed to these boards. We have effective executives on these state enterprises, Mr. Speaker. Many of them are now returning profits to this country instead of returning losses under my colleagues opposite. Mr. Speaker, this is a working government. We have made promises to the people. We are keeping those promises, Mr. Speaker, and there will be more to come, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. S. Hosein: So, when my friends opposite want to talk about corruption and mismanagement, I want to encourage them that they should first look in the mirror, Mr. Speaker. I thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Well said, well said.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Yes, Diego Martin North/East.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, he made his contribution already. Mr. Speaker, have you ruled on the fact that he made his contribution already? Mr. Speaker, have you ruled?

Hon. Member: Sit down.

Mr. Speaker: You have a seat Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Colm Imbert (*Diego Martin North/East*): But I sat down when you stood up.

Mr. Speaker: Well, I do not think it is within your purview to wave down other Members of the House.

Mr. C. Imbert: But he shouted at me.

Mr. Speaker: No, he was not shouting at you; he was shouting at me.

Hon. Member: Worse yet.

Mr. Speaker: Well, you see, rather than run the risk of being bombarded with unmitigated sophistry, the plain words of the Standing Orders do not require you to reserve your right to speak. So, all the noise you were making about speaking about the Motion rather than on the Motion, and that is why I described it as unmitigated sophistry. Just have recourse to the plain words of the Standing Order. You do not need to circumnavigate the Standing Orders to find a justification by the use of sophistry. The plain words of the Standing Order. So go ahead, Diego Martin North/East.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would recommend to my colleague from Oropouche East, he should study May's parliamentary procedure and McGee to determine the correct procedure with respect to this matter.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, since it is a convention, a tradition, but not a rule, I will try my best on the next occasion to satisfy the Member for Oropouche East. It is not a rule.

So, Mr. Speaker, this Motion, which I think we need to read over, is a very timely and important Motion. The Member for Barataria/San Juan spent, however

long he spent, 45 minutes, not addressing a single statement, allegation, or fact produced by the Member for Arouca/Lopinot. Not one.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Imbert: Instead, for the last 15 or 20 minutes, we were regaled with how wonderful the UNC Government is in so many areas. Nothing to do, nothing to do with the Motion, Mr. Speaker. Nothing. So, I think it is necessary to bring the House back to reality and let us go to the Motion. Because the Member for Barataria said nothing with respect to any of the recitals or the resolution. So, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, I will read the Motion again.

"*Whereas* State Enterprises and State…"—

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that is absolutely necessary.

Mr. C. Imbert: But, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: How you use your time is a matter for you—

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Speaker:—it is not absolutely necessary.

Mr. C. Imbert: With your permission, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I said, however you use your time, it is a matter for you.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission, thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Once it is within the rules, however you use it is a matter for you.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, Sir.

"*Whereas* State Enterprises and State-Controlled Institutions manage substantial public assets and resources on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago;

And whereas their effective management requires that Boards of Directors discharge their fiduciary responsibilities in accordance with the law;

And whereas executive management should be suitably qualified, experienced and competent to effectively manage these State Enterprises and State Institutions, and remain accountable to their respective Boards of Directors;

And whereas recent…"—and this is the relevant part—"… reported developments within the State Enterprise/Institution Sector have raised public concerns regarding Board appointments, the conduct of executive management and inadequate separation of responsibilities among shareholders, Boards of Directors and executive management; *And whereas* reports of conflict of interest may undermine public confidence in State Enterprises and State-Controlled Institutions;

Be it resolved that this House express its concern over the governance of State Enterprises and State-Controlled Institutions..."—and the last part of the resolution, the second resolution, is—"…that the Government take appropriate measures to strengthen transparency, accountability…"—et cetera.

Now, as I said, the previous speaker, Minister Hosein, did not address any of these issues, and it is very important that we look at what has happened over the period May 2025 to October 2026, because that is what this Motion is all about. It is about recent developments. It is not about what happened under Eric Williams or George Chambers, or even Patrick Manning, for that matter. It is about what is going on now.

Now, when one looks at what occurred between May of 2025 and October of 2026, and one looks at the established good governance standards for state enterprises and statutory authorities around the world, and in Trinidad and Tobago, and I will tell this Parliament what they are. You have the OECD Guidelines on Corporate Governance of State-Owned Enterprises. The Trinidad and Tobago Corporate Governance Code, and the Ministry of Finance's own State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual. When one looks at what is in these guidelines, the three of them, and one looks at what has happened between May 2025 and October 2026, what you see is the State getting directly involved, interfering politically, hands-on as a political owner of these entities, rather than the arms-length role that is recommended.

The most serious failures are complete replacement of boards, notwithstanding, whether these boards had performed creditably or not. Notwithstanding, whether members of the boards were neutral and were affiliated with any political party or not. Complete eradication of boards. Some of the board seats went to relatives and party figures. There was no merit-based process for the appointment of boards. So, that is one of the most serious failures that has occurred over the last—is it 16 months, 18 months whatever. Eighteen months.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Imbert: There was also instability. Directors who challenged decisions were removed. Several companies ran under acting chief executives for long periods. Now, that creates a problem because state enterprises in particular, as opposed to statutory authorities are incorporated under the Companies Act, and it is the directors of the company that are responsible to the company, not the

management *per se*. It is the directors. So, if you do not have directors and you have companies running under acting chief executives for long periods, you are going to run into serious governance problems, leading to all sorts of things that my colleague read out. For example, what we see inside of here in this TSTT report, in terms of alleged corruption, alleged malfeasance and so on.

Then we saw an absence of due process. People were dismissed or sent on leave without investigations, or without investigations being concluded, or without being given the right to a hearing, or they were not even told what was going on, they were just dismissed. Then, of course, we have the perennial problem of enterprises not submitting their audited accounts.

What also happened? What did we see? The famous flawed $3.4 billion HDC tender fiasco. The diversion of monies that were specifically raised to deal with arrears owed by state enterprises to suppliers and contractors, and there are numerous. There was a series of financing arrangements that were done in early 2025 to put state enterprises in funds to deal with the mounting arrears that they have—WASA, HDC, et cetera, RDC, and so on. The Minister of Finance, the Government—because I assume he did not do this on his own, I am assuming this was a Cabinet decision. The Government just decided to repurpose all of these loans—$1.3 billion in loans, which were to deal with serious problems within state enterprises, was diverted and put into the Consolidated Fund to deal with budgetary expenditure of salaries, and so on. So that created another problem, another governance problem, because all of these entities have huge arrears in terms of money owed to suppliers and so on.

So, if we look at various standards, the OECD Guidelines that I just mentioned, the international benchmark is the state is its owner, but the boards run the company. If you look at the State Enterprise Performance Monitoring Manual, there are series of criteria that boards must follow. Most of which were not followed in the last 18 months. If you look at the procurement issue—I mean, that is the most vexing issue of all that has come out over the last 18 months, you have complete failure to follow the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property law and the regulations, and so on. Then you have issues of conflict of interest and the issue of persons in public life having conflicts of interest.

3.30 p.m.

So let us look and see what really happened over the last 18 months in the context of the Motion, rather than whatever we heard from the Member for Barataria/San Juan. So I have found 67—that is the number I have come up with—67 persons, either at board level or senior management level, who have either been dismissed, have resigned, or sent on leave. Let us go through. We have Mr. Jeevan Joseph from WASA. My colleague would have mentioned some of them, but he was not as expansive as I intend to be. Dr. Ahmad Khan from NGC; Romel Lalloo from Heritage; Randy Ramadhar Singh from NGC; Curtis Dennie from PLIPDECO. I am told that some of these people were given no notice whatsoever that they were going to be removed. They were just removed.

Let us go into details now. Let us look at energy. You have NGC, Heritage, Paria, Lake Asphalt and PLIPDECO. The first appointee under this administration for the NGC, his appointment was revoked within one month; the reason given, realignment of tasks. The second appointee, Gerald Ramdeen, appointed in July

2025, his name was reportedly withdrawn after objections from Cabinet Ministers because of his history in terms of being charged for allegations of fraud. Dr. Ahmad Khan's appointment was revoked on the 21st of November 2025, after he challenged board decisions. He said he refused to be a rubber stamp.

This brings us back to the whole question of direct political interference in a state enterprise. That was what he said; the Government said nothing. It was just Ahmad Khan gone. Then Vernon Paltoo, National Energy President, sent on pre-retirement leave, reportedly forced out. Verlier Quan-Vie, NGC Vice President, resigned on the 30th of September 2025. Toni Sirju-Ramnarine, NGC Green President, resigned October 2025. Dominic Rampersad, PPGPL President, took early retirement in November 2025.

Then we have Heritage Petroleum Company Limited. The Chairman, Kurt Ramlal, a known UNC supporter, and CEO of UDeCOTT between the 2010 and 2015 period, resigned in August of 2026—just the other day—after being asked to go. This followed allegations of impropriety in contract allegation. This is all in the public domain "eh". Director Romel Lalloo was dismissed on the 24th of November 2025 over an allegation of sexual harassment, which he denies, but no information as usual; he gone. CEO Erik Keskula resigned on the 30th of June 2025. That is it, no reason given; "he gone".

Paria Fuel Trading Company Limited: The Acting General Manager, Joanne Sinanansingh, resigned in January of 2026. The Chairman, Nyree Alfonso, resigned in May 2026, after 10 months.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. C. Imbert: Nyree, yeah. "Nyree leave dem too."

Lake Asphalt of Trinidad and Tobago (1978) Limited: Acting CEO, Swedaka Matthews, sent on leave, November 2025.

In PLIPDECO, Nigel Subiah, VP, and Corporate Secretary, Lyman, fired in June 2025 on disciplinary charges. PLIPDECO President, Dr. Curtis Dennie, appointed in August 2025, resigned on 31st December, 2025.

Caribbean Airlines: Caribbean Airlines lost eight executives between August 2025 and May 2026. Guess what happened in March 2026? After that purge, Caribbean Airlines had to go to the Government to get a bailout of $1 billion—

Mr. Scott SC: One billion?

Mr. C. Imbert:—in March 2026, and they wanted a write-off of debt and a bailout. The persons who left: CEO Garvin Medera; CFO Varuna Kuarsingh; Kern Gardiner; acting CEO, Nirmala Ramai. You had Ms. Lalla leaving as well, and the HR Vice President leaving in May of this year.

Coming back to procurement issues, the Blue Wave Harmony, which I see is still tied up down in Chaguaramas, was detained by the US Coast Guard in 2024, yet, somehow, the persons in the various state-controlled enterprises who are responsible for the ferry service decided to procure this vessel.

TSTT, well, we heard about that. Kent Western resigned in 2025. Acting CEO, Keino Cox, was replaced by Reza Hosein in August 2026. Now, I do not want to go into any detail. I have this audit report, just like my colleague, but, I mean, this makes horrible reading. All kinds of things going on inside of here. You have the former CEO accusing the Corporate Secretary of misconduct, of not declaring a conflict of interest, of delaying the procurement of a provider of

services deliberately to favour somebody else. And the report, the independent investigation report, 4th of November 2026, hot off the press, tells you that virtually every allegation made by Mr. Cox against the Corporate Secretary was false. That is what it says.

Then it goes into great detail of all of the alleged misconduct of the CEO, the CEO appointed by them, after they chased out Mr. Western—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Imbert:—to appoint somebody. I mean, what a mess. I am not going to go into any great detail. That would take me hours to talk about that. But let us go on. Amplia Communications, General Manager, Shawn Clarke, left in April 2026. Directors Kyle Maloney and Nadira Pabhudial resigned in July 2026. NEL, four directors left. David Robinson resigned on 7th January, 2026. Let us go on.

WASA: The CEO, Mr. Halliday, and nine other executives were fired in June 2025. There is also a question of a conflict of interest, a board member, Tawari Tota-Maharaj, works at Desalcott, which is a major supplier of services to WASA.

Hon. Member: What?

Mr. C. Imbert: I am telling you. It is facts, you know.

Mr. Scott SC: That is not serious.

Mr. C. Imbert: I am not making this up. This is in the public domain, that a director of WASA, appointed by the UNC, works at Desalcott, a supplier of services to WASA. Then you have Jeevan Joseph resigning in November 2025, and HR Director, Mervyn Gibson, in February 2026.

At T&TEC, Chrisalston Belle resigned on 31st August, 2025.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. C. Imbert: Yeah, made to take early retirement. You know? Let us go on. LandmarkTT—

Hon. Member: Oh God.

Mr. C. Imbert: "Ah doh have time." All I will say is that it is alleged, and this is in the public domain, that the CEO, Ms. Poona, is a friend of the Minister of Land and Legal Affairs. That is all I will say. The Minister could say, "That is not true."

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Imbert: He could say, "That is not true."

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. C. Imbert: Alright, I just said so. I just said so.

Land Settlement Agency: they forced out the former CEO, Mr. Hazar Hosein. They chased him away.

Hon. Member: Fifteen years.

Mr. C. Imbert: More than 15, from 1999. It is 27 years. Hazar Hosein—and that is the same nonsense uttered by the Member for Barataria/San Juan, who alleged that I recommend Hazar Hosein to be the CEO of LSA, when Hazar Hosein was appointed under Basdeo Panday in 1999, 27 years ago.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Imbert: They are not serious, you know. They are not serious.

Hon. Member: Political "peewat".

Mr. C. Imbert: I tell you.

Exim Bank: The CEO, Navin Dookeran—and I want to say now, I want to give tribute to Mr. Navin Dookeran, the son of Winston Dookeran.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Imbert: When the Board reported to me, as corporation sole, that they had done their interviews—I think Navin Dookeran was a lecturer at UWI at the time. They had done their interviews, and they had arrived that the best choice for the CEO of Exim Bank was Navin Dookeran. They said they just needed to let me know that he was Winston Dookeran's son, and we all know who Winston Dookeran is and was, a former UNC Minister, the leader of the COP. Certainly not—

Hon. Member: Political leader.

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, at one time, political leader of the UNC. I forgot that. Certainly not a PNM. No part of him is a PNM. When I looked at Mr. Navin Dookeran's résumé, and I looked at the evaluation, I endorsed his appointment as the CEO of the Exim Bank, and he did a tremendous job.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. C. Imbert: Why get rid of him for? For what?

Then you have in FCB, the—I do not know what to call him. I am trying to find a word, Mr. Speaker, that would not be deemed to be unparliamentary. The strange Minister of Planning, under this administration, in the public domain, Ms. Darbasie had indicated that she was going because she had reached retirement age. The Board had asked her to stay on until they could find a successor, and she was due to leave at a particular time. It is reported in the public domain that the strange Minister of Planning just told her, "Time to go". That is the same thing that happened with Hilaire. It is no wonder he did not appear for cross-examination. I do not think he would have been a good witness on the witness stand with respect

to Dr. Hilaire.

Mr. Gonzales: "Ent he was a priest?"

Mr. C. Imbert: Defrocked.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. C. Imbert: So that they chased away the CEO of FCB. Then the Deputy CEO, Neela Moonilal-Kissoon—no relation, I assume, to Oropouche. You are sitting in Oropouche East? Chase, gone. Jason Julien comes over as CEO, "chase away, gone." Okay?

The National Investment Fund Holding Company Limited: General Manager, Wayne Dass, resigned. The Heritage and Stabilisation Fund: Arjoon Harripaul resigned from the Board and then was mysteriously appointed chairman. Let us go to eTecK. The Chairman of eTecK, Susilla Ramkissoon-Mark, got into a public battle with the Minister of Trade, Investment and Tourism. Let me get the gentleman's correct name. I just want to make sure that you know—I think it is "Satayama", something like that.

Hon. Member: Sacha Cosmetics.

Mr. Speaker: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. C. Imbert: Yes, assist me.

Mr. Speaker: Satyakama.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you very much. Satyakama.

Mr. Speaker: It means the desire for truth.

Mr. C. Imbert: Thank you very much.

Hon. Member: Sacha Cosmetics.

Mr. C. Imbert: So that the Minister of Trade, Investment and Tourism got into a

public fight, or Ms. Ramkissoon-Mark got into a public fight—I think that is more likely—with the Minister of Trade, Investment and Tourism, and a big battle over ministerial instructions or directions, or ministerial policy with respect to the continuation of the Hilton hotel. Because the Hilton hotel has been a landmark, an icon in Trinidad and Tobago for as far as I can remember, Mr. Speaker.

That Hilton hotel has been there for over 50 years. That employs at least 300 people from the surrounding areas. It is a brand. It is an upscale hotel. Governments over the years, UNC Government, NAR Government, PNM Government, over that period of 50 years, have spent considerable sums upgrading the Hilton. But with old hotels, you have to continuously deal with the infrastructure, and so on, and the People's National Movement had made arrangements for the upgrade of the renovation of the Hilton to bring it up to modern standards. The process had begun, and in comes the UNC. The next thing, big bacchanal between the Chairman of eTecK and the Minister of Trade, Investment and Tourism. The next thing, you know, they fired the Minister of Trade, Investment and Tourism out of the Hilton. They sent it to Minister of Land and Legal Affairs, who seems to be accumulating everything.

5.45 p.m.

And then what happens after that?

Mr. Gonzales: Only land.

Mr. Imbert: After they move it from Trade to Land, Hilton is gone. Hilton decides that is it. They are no longer associated with this company; the workers get retrenchment notices, there is tremendous uncertainty, and the whole question of branding the Hilton as a Hilton property is now up in the air. That is

governance, UNC style, with respect to eTecK.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert: And it is all about who has more clout. I have to assume that the Minister of Trade, Investment and Tourism simply did not have as much political influence as Mrs. Ramkissoon-Mark. I have to come to that conclusion because how could a chairman cause a Minister to be fired from an entity? But it happened. So, Angostura: Deputy CEO, Rahim Mohammed was sent on leave 26 February, 2026 and resigned 12 March, 2026. NCSHL: CEO Lester Leu was put on leave on the 18th of August,2026. The allegations involved procurement, the use of Members of Parliament's names, and treatment of staff. NAMDEVCO: CEO Nirmala Debysingh was put on leave on the 3rd of August, 2026. The Sports Company CEO's contract was not renewed. The NFM CEO resigned. The iGovTT CEO left, and now we have the complete collapse of the South West Regional Health Authority. Mr. Speaker, if you go—

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Imbert: Yes, complete collapse. If you go to the website of the SWRHA—the official website—click on it, and you get a bad extension. Nothing; a blank page—"504 bad link" or something like that—or "404". There is nothing there. Click it now, and you will see—nothing. The whole caboodle quit, Mr. Speaker. The whole of the South West RHA quit. And I have seen something recently—a report from the newspapers indicating that the Minister of Health said, "Well, Cabinet has made a decision, and appointments will be made soon". But right now, the South West Regional Health Authority does not have a functioning Board. That is a health institution that serves 600,000 people in this country. How can

you have such an important institution with the San Fernando hospital and all of the other health facilities that it controls, and the responsibility for the health care of over half a million people—no Board. No Board—they are just disappearing in droves.

There was an allegation denied by the Member for La Brea. Because I am coming now to the whole question of nepotism. Because we have seen things here, Mr. Speaker, in this incarnation of the UNC. The whole question of nepotism and governance has just gone out the window. It has gone off the deep end. Because we have a number of persons who are close relatives of Government Ministers and Government MPs who are sitting on Boards, Mr. Speaker. This is—you know, under the PNM if one person—a third cousin of somebody was associated with a state company—not even chairman—

Hon. Member: Uproar.

Mr. Imbert: Uproar, front page—UNC Monday Night Forum. Noise—noise for weeks. Now we have a situation where "everybody brother, sister, mudda, fadda, tanty, nennen, wife, and husband is on state boards"—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert:—and not a word. Nobody says anything. Not a word. It is good now. It is good now. It is good now.

Mr. Hosein: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I am not disturbed by the Member for Barataria/San Juan. I am not disturbed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hosein: Who—[*Inaudible*]—gave contract to—[*Inaudible*]

Mr. Padarath: Suzy.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, on this occasion, I will not seek your protection. Because their sotto voce cross-floor is so weak that it is to be ignored!

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert: It is to be ignored! You see, it is just like the response of the Member for Barataria/San Juan to the Member for Arouca/Lopinot. He did not deal with a single point made by the Member for Arouca/Lopinot.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert: And I am making a specific point. We are talking about relatives of the MPs and Ministers who are now populating state boards as if it is the norm, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: You have one minute of regular time.

Mr. Imbert: May I get my extra time?

Mr. Speaker: Yes, you can.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you so much.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert: I am not going to call names. I was just speaking about a particular entity, the South West RHA. And I saw there, allegations that two of the members of the Board were related to Members of Parliament on the front Bench here. One did not deny it, and one denied it. That is in the public domain.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Imbert: The seat you were sitting in just now.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. Imbert: So, all I am saying is that this does not make for good governance. You know, apart from all the old talk, you have to look at governance standards,

Mr. Speaker. You have to look at what is right and what is wrong. And if you have a plethora of close relatives of Government MPs and Government Ministers, it is going to lead to allegations of conflict of interest, Mr. Speaker. That is what is going to happen. So, the entities that I saw that have relatives—and I mean, I am sure that it is more—eTecK, NLCB, National Petroleum—I am not calling names; I am just calling companies—South West RHA, EXIM Bank, NGC—that is just a few. And none of this is good for the good governance of state enterprises, Mr. Speaker.

And you see, there is a real problem with the governance of state enterprises, and I am sure the new Minister of Finance has encountered this: The State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual gives guidelines for the way state enterprises should conduct themselves. And it deals with litigation, conflicts of interest, and remuneration. There are all sorts of guidelines in the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual. And the problem is that there is a big argument that the manual has not been codified and put into law, so it is not legal.

The problem a Minister of Finance finds himself in—and this has happened in all governments that I have looked at over the last 30-40 years. The problem that the Minister of Finance finds himself in is that he publishes the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual; he expects Board members to follow it; he expects that there will be not be any nepotism, corruption, malfeasance, and so on. He expects that, but you have the companies' directors saying, "Listen, we are in charge, not you". "You are just the shareholder, and if you do not like what we are doing, you can fire us." And the directors are well aware that it takes a long time—look at the South West RHA, for example. A long time that is going on.

Look at for example, the number of Boards. I have not listed them, but there are a series of very important entities in Trinidad and Tobago, state enterprises, statutory authorities, and so on, that have no functioning Boards right now. And I mean, I have been around for a long time. I have been in government, and I know how long it takes to appoint people to state boards. It takes quite a while. So, when you have directors challenging Ministers and challenging the Minister of Finance in particular, and saying, "You cyah tell me what to do". "Under the Companies Act, I have a fiduciary duty to the company, not you. You are just the shareholder." They know it is going to take a while. They know it is going to be political fallout. They know there is going to be push back and that they will see all sorts of things in the media and on social media and so on.

I am tying this in to placing friends and family on state boards, because they will believe that you cannot do anything to them. That if a Minister, for example, sought to fire his spouse from a state board for whatever reason, it is going to be scandal. And therefore, I am cautioning Members opposite to be very careful about appointing relatives to state boards. It leads to all sorts of problems. And be very careful about appointing close friends and associates to state boards because when you catch them doing stupidness, they will say, "Well, fire meh nah". And a government cannot operate like that, Mr. Speaker. So let us go on.

In NAMDEVCO, a director boasted about firing the CEO. There are all sorts of issues in National Quarries, all sorts of issues in T&TEC where you have allegations of hiring of political operatives and so on—not based on merit but based on association. You have issues of sexual harassment—a hot topic these days. I think I saw something last night about that.

And we go back, Mr. Speaker, to the whole question as to what is going to happen with the national airline. Now, the national airline under the former UNC Administration lost about $700 million a year. Seven hundred million a year—every year. When we came in, Mr. Speaker, we had to make decisions on how to deal with the unprofitability of the national airline. It eventually turned an operating profit in 2025 but still cannot handle its debt service and so on. It is a very, very difficult and complex matter, Mr. Speaker. It requires proper, cogent and disciplined attention. I noticed that the UNC Government has already fallen into the trap of pandering to interest groups with respect to flights. I heard about a flight the other day that came from a foreign destination and had 10 people on board. Now, yes, it looks good to have a particular flight from a foreign destination, but how can an airline make money with 10 people arriving on a flight from an international destination? You cannot do that, Mr. Speaker. You cannot do that.

So, if I go back to the Motion now, I have never seen so many unsuitable people appointed to state boards. I have never seen such chaos within the state enterprise sector. I have never seen people appointed by a government—it is not that they came in and they "clean house", you know. They put their own people in, and then they fired all of them. What is going on, Mr. Speaker? This is a very serious matter. I therefore support my colleague, and I am very concerned about the governance of state enterprises in Trinidad and Tobago. When I look at all the—I call it scorched earth—when you look at the people, those are not PNM people; it is UNC people they are putting there who have proved to be unsuitable, who have allegations of corruption, who have allegations of sexual harassment,

and who have allegations of misfeasance. That is who they are putting. They put them in, fired them, and then replaced them with further "unsuitables", Mr. Speaker.

The last thing I will say—I would just caution the Government—I have been in government several times, I have been in Opposition several times, and I can tell you what has happened every single time I have come out of Opposition into government. I am bombarded by people who say they were victimized by the previous government. They were treated badly, and they need to get some kind of assistance. And there is always the temptation when these people come running to you and say, "The previous Government treat meh bad", and "Allyuh have to help we", and they make them managers and directors, and then you discover that they were dismissed for good reasons, Mr. Speaker. So, I am calling on the Government to adhere to the second resolution here, that the Government takes:

> "…appropriate measures to strengthen transparency, accountability, competence, institutional independence, adherence to established principles of corporate governance, and…ensure that appointments and decisions concerning these institutions protect the public interest."

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government Business, whilst I recognize you—and I will call on you because of time and the intervening tea break. I propose to take the tea break now, and I will hear you after the tea break, unless the Members wish to—

Hon. Member: No, no.

Mr. Speaker: You wish to continue? Yes? Well, all right, Leader of

Government Business.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: But we will take a tea break at 4.30.

4.00 p.m.

The Minister of Public Utilities and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Barry Padarath): Thank you most kindly, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: Mr. Speaker, coming after the Member for Diego Martin North/East, it was a bit ironic that a man who served as Corporation Sole for more than nine years in our nation's history by virtue of being the Minister of Finance sought to lecture the Government about its role and responsibility with respect to state enterprises and good governance once had his own Prime Minister and I quote from the Trinidad *Express* dated January 17, 2017, former Prime Minister:

> "...too many state-owned enterprises are underperforming"

You see, Mr. Speaker, if hypocrisy—

Ms. John: Had a face.

Hon. B. Padarath:—and irony had a face, it would be the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: Former, former Prime Minister Rowley on more than one occasion was at pains to describe the underperformance, the challenges that continued to plague the state enterprise sector under the Member for Diego Martin North/East. That is not an indictment on the Member for Fyzabad, it is an indictment on the tenure of the Member for Diego Martin North/East when he

served as Minister of Finance of this country.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: And if that was not worse, when the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West became the Prime Minister for one short month, he sought to do something about it because he expressed absolutely no confidence in the Member for Diego Martin North/East—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath:—to administrate the Ministry of Finance or to deal with the state enterprises sector. But the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West may very well have known what it is he was doing in respect to that appointment.

You see, Mr. Speaker, I heard the Member for Diego Martin North/East use a word, and, strangely enough, Mr. Speaker, I said to myself, I said, my, how times have changed. How times have changed indeed, when the Member for Diego Martin North/East, almost in hysteria, in humour, told this Chamber that the Government was engaging in what? Nepotism. And he wants to warn this Government about nepotism. I want to tell the Member for Diego Martin North/East that there is no Government Minister on this bench, whose wife had to be paid $7.2 million. Whose wife started off as a school teacher ended up being a multimillion-dollar contractor, as reported on the 16th of November 2016 in the Trinidad *Express* under the name of Suzanne Imbert.

Hon. Members: "Ohhh." What!

Hon. B. Padarath: And then you want to talk about nepotism. Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, 48(6). That matter was dealt with in the courts. There is a court decision and it is simply untrue; it is fake, false, a lie. It was dealt with.

It is not true. It is not true.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Do not make a speech. Do not make a speech.

Mr. Imbert: That is not true.

Mr. Speaker: I am standing. Have a seat. Have a seat. And you must know better than to stand on the Floor and accuse another Member of lying. No, you must know.

Hon. Member: It was on the front page.

Mr. Imbert: It is not true.

Mr. Speaker: You must know.

Mr. Imbert: It is not true.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, you accused everyone of nepotism; it is a fair comment. It is a proportionate response.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, it was a false newspaper report, and I received a settlement from the *Express*. It is not true; it is a lie.

Mr. Speaker: Have a seat. Stop taking up the Member's time. Continue.

Hon. B. Padarath: Thank you, most kindly, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: Mr. Speaker, that which they accuse us of is often the DNA and the pattern of the Members when they served in Government.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: And that is not exclusive to the Member for Diego Martin North/East, throughout their political history, that has been the DNA of the

People's National Movement.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: My colleague from Arouca/Lopinot sought to introduce several issues as it relates to several state enterprises and I will deal with them one by one. I often tell my colleague for Arouca/Lopinot, be careful of what you ask for, because you will get and you will get more than that, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: You see, I could stand in this House proudly and tell you, as the Minister of Public Utilities, that at no point in time did any of my election agents have cause to be published by the Elections and Boundaries Commission, on my advice to the Elections and Boundaries Commission. And then turn up, having received millions of dollars in contracts. That is on the public record in an organisation—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath:—where the Member served as the Minister, the line Minister, that is on the public record inside of WASA, that is on the public record inside of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, and you want to stand up here and be pious and call for criminal investigation? If that does not warrant a criminal investigation in terms of misbehaviour in public office, I do not know what is.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: I do not know what is. Up to this time, the Member never told us how someone who was listed as his election agent on the EBC, the records published in the newspapers, got sole-select contracts weeks before a general election under a state enterprise, a statutory authority under his purview as the line

Minister. That is on the public record. That is what is bolted to the chest of Member for Arouca/Lopinot.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: Mr. Speaker, the Member introduced the issue of TSTT. First of all, the Member said that the former CEO of TSTT, Mr. Kent Western, was fired from TSTT. Mr. Speaker, July 21st, 2025, the daily *Express* reported that Mr. Western resigned from TSTT. They cannot tell the truth on little things, you expect them to tell the truth on anything else? When Mr. Cox became the acting CEO of TSTT, the Member will not tell you that Mr. Cox served for 10 years—under the PNM's tenure as a senior manager inside of TSTT, as a senior manager. All of those programmes that the Member for Arouca/Lopinot spoke about, many of them existed while he was Minister of Public Utilities under Mr. Cox, many of the programmes.

Mr. Speaker, this Government—and I said it from day one, we have no sacred cows. "We eh holdin', no brief for nobody."

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: And therefore, if a matter arose inside of TSTT, and that is why I could have reported to the nation, I did not do like my colleague for Arouca/Lopinot, that when they asked me about WASA and T&TEC, that I wringed my hands. I do not know about them. That was the approach that the Member for Arouca/Lopinot would take when he served as Minister of Public Utilities, attempting to separate himself from the institution and the Ministry. What I told the country, Mr. Speaker, very frontally and I will say it here, you see "when you have no cocoa de sun, yuh cud stand up big and bad and bold—

Hon. Member: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath:—and tell the country there were allegations inside of TSTT related to Mr. Cox, the matter was dealt with when the allegations came before the board and that is board to have, that is Chairman to have.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: And therefore the chips will fall where they may, because this Minister, and the Member for La Brea and the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, who has responsibility for leading the Ministry of Public Utilities, "we eh have no cocoa in de sun"

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: "We have no cocoa in de sun." So you call ad nauseam for criminal investigation. But I will tell you what would warrant a criminal investigation. You see, I stood in this Parliament together with the Member for Siparia and I remember, I asked, together with the Member of Siparia very frontally, the former, former Prime Minister, I asked the Member for Diego Martin North/East as Minister of Finance, Corporation Sole, when Amplia was acquired, what the Government's role in all of this. What was the advice provided to TSTT's board? We dealing with state enterprise, hear what happened with state enterprise under their tenure. A former, former Prime Minister, a former Minister of Finance and a former Minister of Public Utilities and they had about 10 Ministers of Public Utilities. So you could imagine what was going on inside of there, from Marlene McDonald, come all the way down to Robert Le Hunte, then ending with the Member for Diego Martin North/East for a short one-month.

Let me tell you what happened inside of TSTT, Mr. Speaker. The

acquisition of Amplia, you had, at that time, the Chairman was one Emile Elias, the best friend of the former, former Prime Minister, Member for Diego Martin West. The Member for Diego Martin North/East, it is no secret, no secret, that the Member for Diego Martin North/East "could not stand de best bone in de man body". He maybe could not stand the best bone in the former, former as well, but to get all the acting appointments, he had to pretend. But I remember I asked the question, the Member for Diego Martin North/East say, I know nothing about that, it never came to the attention of the Cabinet. I will tell you why it never came to the attention of the Cabinet.

When I became Minister of Public Utilities, one of the first things we did, we said we will launch an investigation into the acquisition of Amplia. I can report to

the Parliament and the country that the investigation is almost complete, but I could also inform the country of a lot more of what they will read about what occurred. Mr. Speaker, there was no valuation of Amplia.

Hon. Members: "Ohhh."

Dr. Moonilal: Ah ha!

Hon. B. Padarath: No valuation of Amplia, millions of taxpayers' dollars pocketed and I want to tell the country, I remember sitting down across there and there was a former Attorney General who used to say, "follow the money". Well, we will follow the money. No valuation report. A chairman who will do the bidding via a phone call. All the way from the top, via phone call. I am advised, you know, when you follow the money, it can tell you who bank account it end up in, by that time, you will be seeing blue. Yeah, you will be seeing blue.

Mr. Hosein: Blue lights?

Hon. B. Padarath: It may not be lights, it may be something else, but it will be something blue. And a lot more will be said about where that money ended up, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it does not stop there. No valuation report. Over $200 million expended of taxpayers' money, $200 million in the first instance, Mr. Speaker. A company that was not even worth half of that, Mr. Speaker, the details will come with the final report. Mr. Speaker, when they bought Amplia, pocketed the money, TSTT then had to give them a loan of $300 million, the exposure to TSTT is over half a billion dollars. Mr. Speaker, that is what they did in the state enterprise, and you want to come here to talk about TSTT. When I asked you as Minister of Public Utilities—I asked: Will there be a report into this matter? Explain to the country.

You would have the opportunity to wrap up this Motion at some point and the question, the question that you must answer to this country, for five years you served as the Minister of Public Utilities, there were these lingering questions and exposure to TSTT of over half a billion dollars in debt, somebody pocketing that money. The Chairman of TSTT resigned after the acquisition of Amplia under the most dubious circumstances. And you never launched an investigation into that? Who were you protecting? Who were you protecting? That is just the first question. You see, they say, mouth open and story jump out.

Hon. Member: "Tory"

Hon. B. Padarath: Story jump out. Wants to lecture my colleague from Fyzabad about WiPay. WiPay? This was an organisation that we inherited. In a different incarnation, call it by a different name, may have had a different complexion.

Member for Siparia always tells us, a rose by another name is a rose. I may not describe it as a rose, but Mr. Speaker, the issues that were confronted by the Member for Fyzabad did not sink this country into millions of dollars in debt. You know why? Any matter that has been brought to this Government's attention, we did not duck, we did not run, and we did not hide from it. We said we would deal with it.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

4.15 p.m.

Hon. B. Padarath: We said we would deal with it and we told the country what we have done under the leadership of the Member for Siparia. But you see, we could do that because we have no exposure. "Yuh have no Minister collecting no money via no proxy. And let me get to dat one. Let me get to dat one, Mr. Speaker."

My colleague for Barataria/San Juan—"Yuh want to talk state enterprise, another state enterprise that fell under the purview of Member for Arouca/Lopinot, who had the audacity, the unmitigated audacity to bring a Motion to criticize this administration about state enterprises." And, Mr. Speaker, before I go down that road, I prepared a dossier. You see, the Member for Diego Martin North/East want to tell us about "All the people who have been removed, all the people that have been fired." With their sanctimonious hypocrisy, you would swear they are all pious and holy, that they got rid of nobody, that their boards were operating to be optimum. But it was on three occasions that the former former Prime Minister had to say that he was totally dissatisfied, they were underperforming and they had to remove people.

Let me start from the top, Mr. Speaker. Former former Prime Minister, January 17, 2017, complaining bitterly about the Boards and the state performance. Then again, Mr. Speaker, on January 27:

"Poor governance guarantees poor performance"

That was the headline of the former former Prime Minister:

"Poor governance guarantees poor performance"

Yet he is complaining about poor governance in the state enterprise sector that he left the Member for Diego Martin North/East to have responsibility for. So on one side of your mouth you are complaining "poor governance guarantees poor performance", but where was the poor performance coming from? The poor performance was coming from the Member for Diego Martin North/East who served as corporation sole. So, when you had Ministers of Government, let us start. *TTT*, December 22, 2019, Cox: Board of *TTT*—former Minister with responsibility for Communication, has to be "reconstituted". Big word for fired, fixed, new Board.

But then, the Member for Arouca/Lopinot comes to talk about *TTT* care. I want to say as a Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister that at no time, no time did any report come about sexual harassment allegations in the Office of the Prime Minister, where any Minister, inclusive of the Prime Minister, reinstated anybody to go back to work inside of *TTT*.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: That was your style. That was your style when Darryl Smith had a $150,000 settlement of taxpayers' money. But you had nothing to say about that Member for Arouca/Lopinot when your Prime Minister took a report and

ripped it up, but today your President, your President hires the same person, the same former Permanent Secretary who was used as a tool to sanitize a Darryl Smith report, to make that person the chairman of the EBC. But again, the gospel of the PNM is being sung in all the institutions that they still have their tentacles in, Mr. Speaker. That is in their DNA. That is their legacy. Mr. Speaker, let us go again. Let us go again, more:

"TTT board fired in surprise move"

Updated December 22, 2019.

"TRHA chairman resigns suddenly"

"Pressure mounts as…DPP yet to view CoE report into diving tragedy"

Pressure mounts on the board of Paria. Yet they had no decency to resign. If you are calling for resignations today, Member for Arouca/Lopinot, where was your voice when five men, somebody's father, somebody's brother, somebody's husband? "Yuh leave them to die in ah pipeline—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath:—"and dat Board was never called upon to resign." Member for Arouca/Lopinot.

Mr. Hosein: "Dey were laughing at people, doh forget."

Hon. B. Padarath: Member for Arouca/Lopinot, if you had any decency, you would have withdrawn this Motion. Those families will never forgive you. The blood remains on your hands and you are laughing now?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: You are laughing now? After you treated those families like dogs? It was the Member for Oropouche East, it was the Member then for

Pointe-a-Pierre who went.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. B. Padarath: It was your Government, your Government who had them in a car park without a meal, "mosquito biting them", people telling them they cannot come into the car park. It was our Members who went down there in Opposition and provided support, and that is why today, one of the very first acts of the Kamla Persad-Bissessar administration, aided and abetted by the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, was to give that payment of $1 million.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: And therefore, you want to know what state enterprises are doing under the administration of Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar? They are bringing dignity back to families—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath:—who you have ripped apart by your actions and that of your Boards, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, more boards again, 2015 to 2025:

Whistleblower fired after revealing abuse under the Children's Authority.

That is under their board. Mr. Speaker:

"…NP board should be fired"

Headline, 2021, Trinidad *Guardian*. It goes again, Mr. Speaker:

TSTT board, no answers to questions over breach on cyber-attack.

"TRHA's CEO fired"

Mr. Speaker, more headlines to go, all under the PNM—

"Two Plipdeco managers fired; board refuses to resign amid new govt"

That happened under their tenure—

"Brooks resigns from NGC

Chairman of the National Gas Company (NGC) Gerry Brooks has resigned.

This was confirmed by the company on Thursday evening after Guardian Media broke the story."

Trinidad and Tobago is still waiting for an answer on that, Mr. Speaker—

"TRHA board not happy with performance

Medical chief terminated"

November 17, 2019, published in the Trinidad *Guardian*:

"Public deserves full disclosure on TSTT CEO'S firing"

Mr. Speaker, under them again—

"Fired Heritage CEO can get $3m"

Under the PNM—

"PM says too many state-owned enterprises underperforming"

Mr. Speaker, it goes again, Trinidad editorial:

"UDeCOTT's lack of financial transparency"

Board has questions to answer. And my colleague from Arouca/Lopinot you know, I know I threw out one question about why that one election agent received contracts. He spoke about the firings or the removal of senior managers inside of WASA with high inflated salaries they gave to a hand-selected few people when they were intent on sending home thousands of WASA workers. The day will come when the Member for Couva North, who has responsibility for UDeCOTT, will tell you why Alisha Romano, a former PNM general election candidate, had to be escorted out of UDeCOTT, but was made a general manager inside of WASA by the Member for Arouca/Lopinot. The Member for Couva North will tell you

the circumstances why Alisha Romano had to be removed from inside of UDeCOTT.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, and it goes some further:

"NLCB director suspended"

From the Board, September 19th, 2024. So, the Member for Diego Martin North/East will make you believe that changes on Boards from time to time are unique to this administration. When throughout their entire tenure, it was "comess and bacchanal" and theft—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath:—theft, theft under them.

Mr. Speaker, five misconduct charges for NLCB director that was on January 3rd reported in Trinidad *Express* 2017.

"Five misconduct charges for NLCB director"

And who was the Minister of Finance with responsibility for NLCB when that happened? Who? The Member for Diego Martin North/East.

"Cabinet appoints committee to probe misconduct allegations at CCC"

Mr. Speaker, Trinidad *Guardian* 2024. Mr. Speaker:

"Imbert: No problems with board of HSF"—yet trouble. Finance Minister Colm Imbert—Shirley Bahadur reporting for the Trinidad *Guardian*.

"Budget woes, delays plague TSC's disciplinary cases"

Mr. Speaker—

"Bitter endings for Angostura CEOs"

And I think they will like this one, authored by one, Asha Javeed, April 15, 2019. Well, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West is not here, but I

am sure he will like that, nonetheless.

"Nidco chairman says contractors' issues will be addressed"

—as the Board battles, by Raphael John-Lall, Trinidad *Guardian*.

"Agard resigns as NWRHA chairman"

Mr. Speaker, 2025 under their tenure.

Self-help body back on track after plagued with problems.

July 22, 2017:

"Piggot claims PP, PNM interference at EFCL"

This brings me to a very interesting point. You see, the Member for Diego Martin North/East spoke, I believe, no, yeah, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, I believe, spoke about EFCL. No, it was a Member for Arouca/Lopinot, I will ascribe it to Arouca/Lopinot, who spoke about the EFCL. Mr. Speaker, you see, in an effort to be spiteful with malice, the former administration closed down EFCL, putting many small and medium contractors in a very precarious situation. They refused. They refused—some of these companies became bankrupt. They had to close down. They lost everything out of spite and malice.

Mr. Speaker, I want to share something with the national community today. I am advised there is a file on EFCL at the Attorney General's Office. You see, there was an instruction when EFCL was closed down by a former Cabinet Minister of the People's National Movement, who instructed that only one contractor was to be paid millions of dollars, while all the small and medium contractors were told, "The company is now defunct and you have nothing to get".

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you with certainty who the contractor was, and you

can connect the dots, and I am so sorry that Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West is not here to connect the dots for us. But you see, Mr. Speaker, there is a file at the Attorney General's Office where an instruction from a former senior Cabinet Minister instructed that NH International be paid all the outstanding sums owed to it by EFCL. Mr. Speaker, I could also tell you that the AG's Office, I am advised, has a copy of the handwritten note.

Hon. Member: "Ohhhh."

Hon. B. Padarath: Mr. Speaker, we heard about waste, we heard about mismanagement, and we heard about corruption.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I heard the Member for Barataria/San Juan speak about the situation regarding EMBDC and utilization of state resources to hound colleagues in this House, particularly, and it is no secret, he never made it a secret, that he has always been a thorn and he will continue to be a thorn on the side of the PNM, and that is the lion himself, the Member for Oropouche East.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: And in an effort to—

Mr. Speaker: Member—

Hon. B. Padarath:—muzzle the Member for—

Mr. Speaker:—before you continue, you have one minute of regular time, but I propose to take a tea break at 4.30, and we come back at 5.15.

Hon. B. Padarath: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is only 15 minutes, can I indulge the House? Because if we have to put it to a vote, we will put it to a vote.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: All right, continue.

Hon. B. Padarath: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: We will go at 4.45, then, we will take the break.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know that they do not want to—they do not want to hear about the files at the Attorney General's Office and all of that, but the Member for Oropouche East continues to be a thorn in the side for good reason, for good reason.

4.30 p.m.

But, Mr. Speaker, another issue that has been brought to my attention is while they funnelled and channelled money—and I remember a former Commissioner of Police telling the country that when the TTPS could not afford vehicles—you want to talk state enterprise?—When they had no money to pay UDeCOTT to refurbish police stations—that the instruction of the former, former Prime Minister was to take $52 million and give it to—

Mr. Hosein: SRP.

Hon. B. Padarath:—SRP Kate to target their political opponents, namely the Member for Oropouche East.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: That is how they utilize state resources to the detriment of state enterprises in this country because of hate, spite and malice against their political opponents.

But the EMBDC matter, Mr. Speaker, you would recall that there were a number of commissions of enquiry, but what has been drawn to our attention is that there is a commission of enquiry that we inherited, and it has to do with Point

Fortin Highway.

Mr. Speaker, many of the attorneys for the State, the hand-selected attorneys who were involved in the persecution, the political witch hunt, and the political persecution of the Member for Oropouche East and others, those hand-selected attorneys, were hired by the former Member for San Fernando West and others. Do you know that the commission of enquiry into the highway features the same attorneys?

But you know, Mr. Speaker, what is this troubling in all of this? Not one hearing has occurred. Not one witness has been called. But do you know how much money the PNM spent, and nothing has been done to pay those attorneys?—$10 million. If that is not scandalous, Mr. Speaker, I do not know what is. I do not know what is.

But in an effort to fill the pockets of those who are doing their political bidding—you have them in EMBDC to hound Dr. Moonilal, and then you are paying them through a commission of enquiry costing this country $10 million, and yet nothing has been done. Not a single matter has been heard, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it gets better. I will turn my attention again to the former Chairman of EMBDC under the People's National Movement. One, Mr. Ronnie Mohammed. The former, former Prime Minister went to the funeral of Mr. Mohammed's father. The owner of Nutrimix, well known to Trinidad and Tobago. He went to the father's funeral and, very publicly, the former, former Prime Minister—great applause and tributes and so on for both father and son. Nothing wrong with that. If that is your friend, that is your friend.

But, Mr. Speaker, you see, they opened a hatchery in the constituency of

Couva South. You want to talk state enterprise? Today we will talk state enterprise. That gentleman was then made the Chairman of Caribbean Airlines and the Chairman of the EMBDC. Mr. Speaker, do you know that the hatchery that the former, former Prime Minister went to open himself in the constituency of Couva South—

I remember when the Member for Oropouche East raised this issue, you know. We were in Opposition, and the Member for Oropouche East—he has all types of sources.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. Hosein: Not news.

Hon. Padarath: Not Newsauce, that is exclusive to the Member for Diego Martin North/East. But the Member for Oropouche East had raised this particular matter. I spoke about it in the budget debate, but, Mr. Speaker, I will give you a little bit more detail. This matter is the subject of an integrity commission investigation, and this matter will also be forwarded through the office of the Attorney General to the Anti-Corruption Investigations Bureau.

Because, up to this time, no one can tell us how a valuation report for over 700—$0.7 million for a connection to that hatchery went to WASA, then forwarded to the Ministry of Public Utilities, was told to WASA that the Ministry of Public Utilities has agreed that it will be reduced from $0.7 million to $5,000. The former Chairman of the EMBDC, former chairman of Caribbean Airlines, a very good friend of the former, former Prime Minister, as admitted by himself at the father's funeral on the public record in the newspaper, moved from $0.7 million.

So, everybody else—and I see my friend from Arouca/Lopinot complaining that the water rate has gone up, the electricity rate has gone up. Where was your concern for taxpayers' money then, when your administration moved from $0.7 million for a connection inside of WASA, for your chairman of Caribbean Airlines at the EMBDC to be brought to $5,000? Where was your concern then? Where was your concern about interfering inside state enterprises? Who called the shots for that to happen? But you want to talk about friends, family, and financiers. That is what happened under your tenure with respect to state enterprises, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, MTS. MTS—half a billion dollars, six companies all sharing almost the same directors, incorporators, et cetera. I want to tell you today that there is a report inside of MTS where millions of dollars—and I heard the Member for Barataria/San Juan put this squarely at the feet of the Member for Arima. The Member for Arima knows all of this. But if you are beholden to people who sought your interests and sought the interests of your family and hold your secrets, then I can understand why you will refuse to do nothing about it.

The Member for Arima will have the opportunity to stand in this Parliament today and tell us whether it is true or it is not true because we have the records, the records are there—whether the state enterprise of MTS that her brother's company received almost all the contracts for school repairs in her own constituency, and how did that occurrence happen? Just fortunately, somebody related to the MP, did not receive the contracts for no other constituency, eh, but all the schools there. But that is how state enterprises are administered, work.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, do you know what the report says? The report says millions of dollars were given in advance payments, and those schools cannot

be found—because not a blade of grass was moved, not a shovel of dirt. But the Member for Arima, knowing all of this, knowing all of this, eh. I mean, let us not put our heads in the sand and pretend.

They know about the Special Branch report. They know about it. They were sitting down inside of the Cabinet when that special branch report came. They knew what was happening in MTS. They knew what was happening in other state enterprises. They knew. The Member for—and I hope the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo will certainly contribute today, even if it is for a few minutes.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: Because when the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo tells you the criteria used to dish out state contracts, not by the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo, he was only aware because he was hearing, he was seeing, he had no authority to do anything, he was not a chairman of any Board, he was not a chairman of any state enterprise, he was not a Minister of government.

Mr. Gonzales: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. B. Padarath: "Ask Obzen how much you get." They will tell you. But then again, you would know. But then again, you will know, you will know. "Ah tell yuh doh trouble, trouble. Doh trouble, trouble because I may tell you how much Obzen get here today and how dey get it, right?"

Hon. Members: [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: Mr. Speaker, and therefore, reading the Motion brought by the Member for Arouca/Lopinot, one really has to ask the question, because some of our colleagues opposite there knew, they may not have been there when these decisions were taken. But it is your right, of course, to support whether it is

Arouca/Lopinot, Arima, whoever it is you all are supporting for leader. But your leader must demonstrate integrity.

Mr. Hosein: Correct.

Hon. Padarath: Leadership must demonstrate integrity.

And therefore, the Member for Arima, knowing all of this, but I just told you that same Member for Arima, brother, repaired the Arima Hindu School, the Arima Secondary School, the Arima RC School, and the Arima Anglican School. All the schools in Arima are under state enterprise. That is why I tell you. You want to talk state enterprise? I can go through from Arouca/Lopinot straight down the line and tell you the connections inside of there, of how these things were dished out for the friend, family, and financier. That I can tell you is not happening under Member for Siparia.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. B. Padarath: And that is why, in a previous debate, I said very strongly it has no chairman inside of MTS who was the Chairman of the constituency of Siparia, unlike what happened in Diego Martin West, who collected money in a brown bag inside of MTS and inside of that same WiPay. So, when they want to talk about WiPay, they know what happened in WiPay. They know which chairman was receiving the contract for NIS contributions, for CEPEP. All of that is what happened.

The Member for Diego Martin North/East sits there, stone-faced. You know why? Because he knew all of that was going on, and he had—

Hon. Member: Nothing to say.

Hon. B. Padarath:—nothing to say and nothing to do because he was just happy

going along for the ride to get an acting appointment.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. B. Padarath: To get an acting appointment, and then at the very last ditch hour, like political vomit, they spewed him out.

Hon. Members: "Ohhhhhhh."

Hon. Member: "Dey put he PS."

Hon. B. Padarath: And they put his PS.

Mr. Speaker, I have just shared with you a few of the examples of what we have been cleaning up in the state enterprise sector. I have given you real-life examples of public officials who have been accused of stealing public money, interference inside of state enterprises. But you know what fundamentally I have shared with you, Mr. Speaker? I have shared with you the comparison between how we treat with matters on this side of the House, compared to how our colleagues treat with matters when brought to their attention. Nothing done. Years have passed. Ten years they served between 2015 to 2025. No investigations, no commission reports except those targeting political opponents.

So, they were not interested in accountability, as the Member for Diego Martin North/East and Arouca/Lopinot spoke about. Nothing about accountability and transparency. All they had to do was hounding for political purposes, their political opponent, spending billions of dollars of taxpayers money in an effort to keep their party in power while between 2015 to 2025 many instances of waste, mismanagement, and corruption found itself in the state enterprises. just naming a few under the Ministry of Public Utilities.

But today, Mr. Speaker, today I can tell you with the certainty when the dots

are connected, the investigations are completed, much of which I spoke about today, Mr. Speaker in the state enterprise sector under the Ministry of Public Utilities—just one Ministry alone will be bridged with the role that a former Minister of government played while holding another role as General Secretary of the People's National Movement, having to account for an institution that we were told was built on "toolum and cake sale outside Massy stores".

Dr. Moonilal: "Ah, a potload ah toolum."

Ms. John: And benne ball.

Hon. B. Padarath: Well, we all know that is a multimillion-dollar facility standing up as a monument of shame and scandal—

Mr. Tancoo: Thievery.

Hon. B. Padarath:—thievery to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Members, we will take the tea break now. We will return at 5.30. p.m. Thank you very much.

4.45 p.m.: *Sitting suspended*.

5.30 p.m.: *Sitting resumed*.

Mr. Speaker: Member for Malabar/Mausica.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Dominic Romain (*Malabar/Mausica*)**:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to join this debate and to lend support to my colleague for Arouca/Lopinot, on what I think is a most timely Motion. Mr. Speaker, permit me to begin by just reading a few headlines from newspaper articles that speak to why

we felt it was necessary to bring this particular Motion:

"67 gone from State boards, public offices in 14 months

...former head of public service says it's not good for stability"

"Republic Bank is too important for silence"

"Two executives exit state companies"

"Republic must answer questions, economists say"

"Kalloo out as NFM CEO after five months"

"NIBTT executive director announces early retirement"

"Second NIB executive to retire early"

"Both ah dem" in their early fifties.

"Hilaire seeks $9.8 million

Fired Central Bank governor claims 'orchestrated plot' to remove him"

"Alfonso resigns as Paria Fuel chair"

"Workers raise red flag at FCB"

"TSTT board member resigns; company now left with three directors"

"NGC revokes board appointment of Ahmad Khan after just 4 months"

"Ramsingh resigns as ADB CEO"

Now, Mr. Speaker, it was my intention to delve a little bit into some of these headlines, but unfortunately, given the short time that I have this evening or this afternoon, I am forced to respond to some of what was said by the two Members opposite who spoke. Permit me to begin with the Member for Barataria/San Juan who made the statement that the last administration shut down Petrotrin to protect Malcolm Jones. Mr. Speaker, for yet another occasion I have to ask the Member for Barataria/San Juan, please use the iPad that we were given to do your research.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain: The doors of Petrotrin were closed on the 30th November, 2018. Malcolm Jones died on August 2nd, 2017.

Hon. Member: "Oh God."

Mr. D. Romain: So, I am confused as to what possible reason any government would go to such lengths to protect a deceased man, Mr. Speaker. And you see that is the problem with Members opposite. They seem confused as to what is the real reason they want to offer the citizens as to why Petrotrin was closed, contradicting what was said by the previous administration. Because I have heard Members opposite say that the reason why Petrotrin was shut down was to protect the owner of AV Drilling, with respect to the fake oil, as they labelled it. The Member for Barataria/San Juan said that, you know, an audit report cannot find someone guilty. But they used an internal audit report from Petrotrin to find Mr. Nazim Baksh guilty of fake oil. Hypocrisy is what it is, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain: But, Mr. Speaker, coming back to the issue of Mr. Malcolm Jones, and I just want to treat with that quickly in the time that I have. Malcolm Jones as we know, there were two items that Mr. Jones was relying on for his defence in that lawsuit that was brought against him in respect to the matter of the WGTL. Those two items, Mr. Speaker, were one, the ruling in the arbitration matter between WGTL and Petrotrin, and the other had to do with the witness statements of two—well four, but in particular two of Petrotrin's former board directors who served with Mr. Jones. And at the time of his death, Mr. Jones was seeking to get access to those two witness statements. Very important. Why?

Because subsequent to his death, Mr. Speaker, Members opposite, Monday Night Forum after Monday Night Forum, they spoke about those two witness statements. They claimed that those two witness statements would prove that the decision of the last administration to withdraw that lawsuit against Mr. Jones was politically motivated.

Mr. Speaker, they went all the way to the Privy Council. The Privy Council found in their favour, sent the matter back to the local court. The then Prime Minister, Dr. Rowley said, enough is enough. He instructed the Minister of Energy at the time, Franklin Khan, to give the witness statements to the Opposition, because they went to the Privy Council through their then lackey, Ravi Balgobin Maharaj.

Hon. Member: [*Laughter*]

Mr. D. Romain: And the witness statements were provided, Mr. Speaker, after they made a mountain out of that issue. As soon as the two witness statements were provided to them, that was the last you heard from the UNC about those witness statements. The next we heard, Mr. Speaker, we saw the media caught up with Ravi Balgobin Maharaj as he was on his way to the Integrity Commission, said he reviewed the witness statements with his attorneys, and they found that there was corruption. He went to the Integrity Commission, this was in June of 2019. We are now in November 2026. Ask them about the witness statements. Where is the proof? They went silent after that, Mr. Speaker. And I recall, because I prosecuted that matter on the radio station. I was a radio talk show host at the time. And many of their supporters, their hard-core supporters who used to call in the radio station and bat for them, were very disappointed that they heard

nothing further from them about those two witness statements which they claimed would have proved that it was politically motivated.

It was interesting to note also, Mr. Speaker, that two of the attorneys who were retained by the People's Partnership Government for an opinion on whether or not they should have sued Malcolm Jones, one being Vincent Nelson and I believe the other one was Mr. Russell Martineau, if memory serves me correctly. Both gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, on the record as having said that when they were asked to proffer an opinion as to whether or not a case against Mr. Jones would be successful, two pieces of information they were not provided with. One, the witness statements, and two, the arbitration ruling. They both said that had they been provided with that information by the then Attorney General, under the People's Partnership, they would have offered a different opinion. Who was the AG at that time? One, Mr. Anand Ramlogan. And one has to ask the question, why they did not provide the information to these two gentlemen, Mr. Speaker? Is it because they wanted a particular opinion, a particular outcome to sue, so of course we know what ensued after that. Big briefs and alleged kickbacks, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Member: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. D. Romain: Yeah, for the kickback. The Member for Barataria/San Juan also spoke to us about ADB, interesting. But I wish, Mr. Speaker, that he had spoken of more issues of more recent vintage as it pertains to the ADB. And I read, article dated 9th September, 2026:

"'Ramsingh resigns as ADB CEO

Neil Ramsingh has resigned as Chief Executive Officer of the…(ADB), with

the bank advertising the position hours after his departure.

In a statement, Ramsingh said his resignation would not affect his commitment to the country's development agenda.

'I also want to place on record that my resignation does not change my commitment to the national development agenda.'"

So he says. But, Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say:

"'A public notice placed by Guardian Life said Ramsingh 'is no longer a representative of Guardian Life of the Caribbean Limited and is not authorised to transact any business on behalf of the company.'"

Mr. Hosein: He is a Pundit.

Mr. D. Romain: He is a Pundit? Interesting.

"Ramsingh also sought the UNC's nomination for the Fyzabad constituency ahead of the 2025 General Election. In January 2025, he was screened at the party's headquarters in Chaguanas as a prospective candidate for the constituency."

And, Mr. Speaker, why is that of concern to us? You see this Government has a track record with the persons that they appoint to boards and executive positions and so on. Because another article, follow-up to this, *Guardian* article dated 20/09/2026:

"Ex-insurance agent who sits on State board accused of defrauding investors more than $1.5M"

And it goes into great detail, Mr. Speaker, as to how this former CEO of the ADB who walked out of Guardian Life having been terminated and walked into the ADB as CEO is alleged to have defrauded his clients, three of them, of at least

$1.5 million. Mr. Speaker, I could tell you from where I sit, professionally, that is just the tip of the iceberg. This individual, Mr. Speaker, was also appointed a director on the board of PSAEL.

Hon. Members: "Wooo."

Mr. D. Romain: Which I believe is under the Member for Barataria/San Juan? Is he still a board member? Is he still a director?

Mr. Hosein: Busy. He is busy.

Mr. D. Romain: He is no longer there?

Mr. Hosein: Busy.

Mr. D. Romain: Who recommended him to the Cabinet, Mr. Speaker? Did you all do your due diligence? No? Okay.

Mr. Marcelle:—that qualifies him.

Mr. D. Romain: "Ahhh", I am not surprised. Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Member: [*Interruption*]

Mr. D. Romain: Yes. Mr. Speaker, there are two other board appointments that have also caused us some concern over the last 18 months. One, has to do with the chairmanship of National Petroleum, which is now chaired by one, Arnold Ram, former Member of this House. But, Mr. Speaker, the reason for our concern stems from a newspaper article dated—let me get it here, I like to quote my sources, July 30th, 2020:

"Why Ram was fired

Cloud over UNC Caroni Central candidate"

And it says:

"'United National Congress…Caroni Central candidate Arnold Ram was fired

by Telecommunications Services of Trinidad and Tobago…for 'misconduct' of a 'serious nature'.

This is stated in a letter addressed to Ram, dated July 30, 2018, signed by executive vice-president of Human Resources, Industrial Relations and Corporate Support Services, Carol David.

Ram's dismissal involved the handling of a bid for 12 three-ton trucks for TSTT's use.'"

Mr. Speaker, this is not the only utility company that Mr. Ram was fired from. He was also fired from T&TEC. But it seems, unfortunately for him he did not have an opportunity to complete the trifecta at WASA. He did not reach there.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain: But yet still in the place of that, not only did Members opposite see it fit to allow him to serve as a Member in this House, but today he is the Chairman of NP. We have concerns about that. We also have concerns, Mr. Speaker, about the Chairman of NGC.

Hon. Members: "Oh God."

Mr. D. Romain: Now my colleague for Diego Martin North/East would have referenced one of the issues with which we have with Mr. Gerald Ramdeen—

Hon. Member: [*Interruption*]

Mr. D. Romain: Yeah, the de facto Minister, yes. But, Mr. Speaker, I wish to reference an article since the Member for Barataria/San Juan decided to take us down memory lane. Permit me to also take a little jaunt along memory lane today to. Article dated May 06, 2014:

"DPP Orders Probe into Prison Litigations

> Director of Public Prosecutions…Roger Gaspard, SC, says he is of the "unflinching view" that there is more than sufficient material in the ruling of High Court Master Patricia Sobion-Awai in the Jamal Sambury assault claim against the State to warrant a criminal investigation of conspiracy to pervert the course of public justice and conspiracy to defraud the State of Trinidad and Tobago.
>
> Gaspard has since advised acting Police Commissioner Stephen Williams to commence 'forthwith' an investigation.
>
> The DPP, on April 30, received from the Registrar of the Supreme Court a copy of the Master's February 5 ruling as well as the transcript of the hearing of the procedural appeal of the proceedings on February 17.
>
> In a statement yesterday, Gaspard said he perused the Master's ruling as well as the transcript of the procedural appeal and 'ethical considerations aside' he was "of the unflinching view that there is more than sufficient material contained therein to warrant an investigation into the commission of several offences including conspiracy to pervert the course of public justice and conspiracy to defraud the State of Trinidad and Tobago."

Mr. Speaker, since 2014 that has been under investigation. As far as I know, that investigation appears to still be ongoing. But the crux of it, Mr. Speaker, is that there were two prominent attorneys affiliated with the United National Congress, one, Gerald Ramdeen and one Varun Debideen, who were accused of cutting and pasting witness statements in an attempt to defraud the State, making claims that prisoners had been abused by the police and by prison officers. Mr. Speaker, they were using, allegedly, the statements of other prisoners who would

have made such claims and were successful in those claims, and so there was simply a transfer. And when Master Sobian-Awai, in treating with the issue of Mr. Sambury, realized that the wording of the witness statements was similar to things she had seen before and raised this issue. And here it is that we have the DPP, still DPP, raising issues and concerns, and he said he was of the unflinching view. This is even before an investigation was conducted. He just perused the ruling of the Master and said, yes, "Ah ready to bring ah case". So, it tells you how serious. But yet still they saw it fit to appoint Mr. Ramlogan to lead the NGC.

Mr. Hosein: Mr. Ramlogan is not leading the NGC.

Mr. D. Romain: Sorry. Mr. Ramdeen.

Dr. Moonilal: Same thing.

Mr. D. Romain: Thank you for the correction. Same thing. I am glad he said that. The same thing. Ramdeen, Ramlogan—

Hon. Member: All of them, same thing.

Mr. D. Romain: Yeah, yeah.

Dr. Moonilal: Anybody with "Ram".

Mr. D. Romain: "Nah." Arnold Ram, Ramdeen, Ramlogan. Yes, yes.

Dr. Moonilal: Ramlogan, Ramnarine—

Mr. D. Romain: Yes. Ramhit? Yeah, yeah, yeah. For some reason, it seems they are all attracted to that side.

But, Mr. Speaker, we are concerned about that.

5.45 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I am also concerned, and with respect to Republic Bank, we would have seen within recent times, Mr. Speaker, the resignation of the man who

was identified to be the next in charge, the next President and Managing Director of Republic Bank, one Mr. Richard Sammy, who, after having been identified to replace the current Chair, the current Managing Director, Mr. Nigel Baptiste, who also recently left early because he was supposed to demit office at the end of this year and demitted, I think, a couple of days ago, or perhaps today. Yeah, I think it is today, Mr. Speaker.

Now, as we know, Republic Bank, Mr. Speaker, is an international entity. They have reach not just locally, but also regionally and as far as the African continent. And concerns have been expressed, Mr. Speaker, with respect to that development and whether or not there might have been some level of political interference in respect of that issue. And in regard to that, Mr. Speaker, we saw where a very prominent director who had served on the board of Republic Bank for some 10 years also would have resigned shortly thereafter. And it is not lost on us, Mr. Speaker, that there may be some link there and some concerns expressed. But what I wanted to just read quickly here, Mr. Speaker— This is the opinion of a regional journalist.

"The economist…"

A regional economist—

"…described Ince's resignation…"

And this is the Director who resigned—

"…as particularly noteworthy because of the Barbadian businessman's long-standing reputation across the Caribbean.

'"There is a lot of controversy surrounding the departures from RBL and other interests in Trinidad and Tobago. There are accusations of political

interference, as the case may be."'

He says:

'"I'm not here to say if that is true or not. However, what really does pique my interest is, given the reputation that Mr. Ince carries in Barbados, and across the region as the ethical businessman, one who is very careful about what he chooses and who he chooses to associate with, as is his right, as is anybody's right."'

But—

'"When you see a resignation of that type of profile, or the person that carries that type of profile, it makes one wonder about why, especially given the reputation and importance of that organisation."'

Mr. Speaker, I saw a couple days ago that Mr. Ince's replacement has been named, and it is one Christlyn Moore. I think we all know who Ms. Moore is.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: She is a nice lady.

Mr. D. Romain: Yes. Very nice lady, I am sure. I have never met her.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. D. Romain: But, Mr. Speaker, if someone who does not live in Trinidad and Tobago, who lives in one of the other territories where Republic Bank has a presence, were to decide—an investor perhaps, a shareholder in Republic Bank in Ghana, were to decide they want to do a search to see who is this new director, what does she bring to the table, what is her competency and so on. Imagine they are likely to come across this, Mr. Speaker. Article dated January 25th, 2017:

"Moore does not regret Visine statement.

Political Leader of the Tobago Forwards Christlyn Moore says despite the flack, she does not reject telling Tobagonians to put visine in water to poison Trinidadians who she claimed were coming over by boat, to vote in the THA elections.

Hon. Member: "Ohhh."

Mr. D. Romain: She was asked about the issue again on Wednesday's *Morning Edition*.

Hon. Member: "Ooh."

Mr. D. Romain: But yet still, Mr. Speaker, I would have just read all of the accolades for her predecessor Mr. Ince. But this is what is likely to be very prominent and what many of us in here would remember, the suggestion that Tobagonians, or the advice to Tobagonians, to put Visine in water to poison Trinidadians. Today she sits on the Board of Republic Bank. Mr. Speaker, I do not know, but this Government just continues to scrape the bottom of the same barrel—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain:—to find people to put on Boards. I mean, it cannot be that difficult. There are so many persons, men and women of letters, Mr. Speaker, men and women of straw, who, when the PNM was in office, they were busy sending letters to the editor. They were busy writing opinions criticizing the last Government, Mr. Speaker. They always made themselves available for comment whenever they had to, you know, make certain negative perceptions or views about the last administration. Seemingly, in the last 18 months, they have developed a chronic case of rheumatoid arthritis.

Hon. Member: [*Laughter*]

Mr. D. Romain: They can no longer type opinions. They have developed laryngitis, Mr. Speaker, and Pip. They can no longer make themselves available to offer comment.

Mr. de Nobriga: Except for video calls.

Mr. D. Romain: Yes, except for video calls as to the governance—

Hon. Members: [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain: —of this country, Mr. Speaker. So, I am sure it is clear, probably they are lying low in the hope that they might get a call to serve on a Board or maybe to fill one of the many, many overseas missions' positions as high commissioners and ambassadors that are yet to be filled after 18 months. So, I am sure you all have a vast pool to choose from.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Couva South, in his contribution, made mention of "they have sources". And we have sources on this side too and I wish to ask a question, Mr. Speaker. While we were on the break, one of our sources sent me a question that he wanted me to ask. They wanted to know why is it that the lawyer who was chosen to do the investigation into Keino Cox is also the private attorney of one Ms. Viveka Pargass, who is the Corporate Secretary of TSTT?

Hon. Members: Wow.

Mr. D. Romain: So Keino Cox makes an allegation against Viveka Pargass, and Viveka Pargass threatens to sue Keino using one Samantha Poona-Singh. That name sounds familiar.

Hon. Members: Wow.

Mr. Hosein: Singh-Poona. Get it right "nah" man.

Mr. D. Romain: Singh-Poona. Poona-Singh.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. D. Romain: A rose by any other name is still a rose.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain: And then TSTT hires a private attorney, the same Samantha Singh-Poona to investigate Keino Cox. I am happy that the Member for Barataria/San Juan corrected me because I believe Ms. Singh-Poona—is that it?—

Hon. Member: Yeah.

Mr. D. Romain: —was attached to his chambers.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain: And when that name first came into the public domain a few months ago, when a company called Landmark TT was formed.

Hon. Member: "Great shame with alyuh."

Mr. D. Romain: I have clients down in Munroe Road, and I drive there a lot. But recently, when I passed, I noticed the sign for the Member for Barataria/San Juan's chambers had come down.

Hon. Member: "Ohhhh"

Mr. D. Romain: Yes, like they do not want nobody to know the affiliation of Ms. Singh-Poona to him.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain: And all of the linkages.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: "Yuh hiding. Hiding"

Mr. D. Romain: Yeah.

Hon. Members: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. D. Romain: Yes. All of the linkages that they sought to make, the Member for Couva South and Barataria/San Juan said he came here expecting that this Motion would reveal bombshells and exposés. We are here about the people's business, right? We are not here to "bus' mark and all dem different tings".

Hon. Members: Yeah.

Mr. D. Romain: All right? But it is interesting that Miss Singh-Poona, her husband is an executive for Landmark TT.

Hon. Members: "Wooh."

Mr. D. Romain: Yeah. Yes. And as we know, several of the executives—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Birchwood: That is why he is the super Minister.

Mr. D. Romain: Yes. Several of the executives of Landmark TT have very close proximity, relationship-wise, to the Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Birchwood: Wow.

Mr. D. Romain: But, Mr. Speaker, we have no issue if you want to put your friends on boards and so on, you know. But it is the hypocrisy. And you are the line Minister. Oh boy, you could have "get" somebody from Public Utilities. You could have "get" somebody from Foreign Affairs. But you put somebody under you.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. D. Romain: And I understand that was one of his election agents. I mean, it

is almost incestuous.

Hon. Members: Wow! "Ohhhh."

Mr. D. Romain: Come on nah man—

Hon. Members: "Ohhhh."

Mr. D. Romain:—Barataria/San Juan, we expected better from you. Yes, yes. I mean, maybe, maybe perhaps that is why Landmark TT was incorporated in February, and by November almost 80 per cent of the houses "done build inno".

Hon. Members: "Hmmm."

Mr. D. Romain: Yes, all approvals and everything granted, while you have other entities catching their "nennen", months and years to get approvals. Well, last time the Member for Barataria/San Juan spoke in this House, he said 70 per cent. That was about a month ago. So, "ah guessing" they probably reach 80 per cent right now.

Hon. Members: Right.

Mr. Birchwood: It climbed. Progression.

Mr. D. Romain: Yes. And again, Landmark TT, where luxury living is redefined.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. D. Romain: "Building house for the rich". But then they want to tell us we are so concerned about the poor and building houses for the poor, middle class.

Hon. Members: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. D. Romain: "Ayeee." Nice houses to you know.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. D. Romain: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I will have to treat with the rest in my next 15

minutes when this Motion comes back. But it would be remiss of me, Mr. Speaker, if, if I were to take my seat without responding in part to the Member for Couva South. Because the Member for Couva South told us a lot about, you know," who family, who get contract, who wife get"—

Hon. Members: "They going beyond six."

Mr. D. Romain: Yes. Oh. We are going beyond six?

Hon. Members: Yeah.

Mr. D. Romain: Oh, that would be great.

Mr. Scotland SC: Speak slowly.

Mr. D. Romain: Yes. So permit me, Mr. Speaker, to reference another article dated the 6th of August, 2020, entitled:

> "Padarath, relative face financial probes"

And it reads:

> "Princes Town MP Barry Padarath says he cannot recall why he issued two First Citizens bank cheques totalling TT$135,800 in October 2014 to then prime minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar while he was her special advisor."

Mr. Hosein: Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Member: To who?

Hon. Members: "Ohhh."

Hon. Member: To who? To who?

Mr. Hosein: Mr. Speaker, I rise on Standing Order 48 (8). This is a Motion—and Standing Order 48(1). This Motion is about state enterprises—

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. Hosein:—and if the Member—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Hosein: Hold on. Hold on.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Hosein: And if the Member—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Hosein: 48(8).

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Hosein: 48(8). 48(8)

Mr. Speaker: All right. Would you allow the Member to make his point?

Mr. Hosein: If the Member wishes to raise the conduct of any Member of this House, it must be filed by virtue of a substantive Motion against the name of the Member. 48(8), 48(1), please, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: No. No. No. The Member did not call your name. The Member called a third party's name. And Malabar/Mausica, you know that is true. If you wish to bring the specific conduct of a Member, then you need to bring a substantive Motion, right? So listen—

Mr. D. Romain: Mr. Speaker, duly noted.

Mr. Speaker: Right, so skirt around that, please, and let us continue.

Mr. D. Romain: All right. So—

Mr. Scotland SC: [*Inaudible*] deal with it.

Mr. D. Romain: So, Mr. Speaker, as we are dealing with the issue of—

Mr. Speaker: Port of Spain South, what did you just say?

Mr. Scotland SC: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Speaker: What did you just say? Stand up.

Mr. Scotland SC: Yes, Sir.

Hon. Members: [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: What did you just say? Port of Spain South, what did you just instruct the Member to do?

Mr. Scotland SC: Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Member: Do not stand when the Speaker is standing.

Mr. Scotland SC: Am I allowed to stand whilst you are standing? I just want to ask?

Mr. Speaker: Yeah. Let me hear.

Mr. Scotland SC: Good. Firstly, Sir, I do not appreciate when you tell me stand up as if I am a child.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Scotland SC: I am not a child. I, I—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Scotland SC: I am advising. I, I respectfully was advising my colleague—

Hon. Members: Yeah. Yeah.

Mr. Scotland SC:—to skirt around your ruling—

Mr. Speaker: No. No. You were not. Have a seat now. I heard what you said. You said, "Deal with it, do not skirt around it." Are you advising the Member to defy my ruling?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Scotland SC: Mr. Speaker, I am not advising the Member to defy your ruling—

Mr. Speaker: I would hardly think so. All right? So now that we have resolved that, have a seat, Member, you have three, two minutes again.

Mr. Scotland SC: So, do not stand up?

Mr. Speaker: No, sit.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: Stop being facetious.

Mr. D. Romain: Mr. Speaker. I take your guidance.

Mr. Scotland SC: Mr. Speaker, I am not being facetious. I will not take that from you.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: All right. Well, let us. Well, let us eat up some more time. If that is what you wish. I do not wish to engage in this, you know. Come on. Malabar/Mausica, come on.

Mr. D. Romain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would simply say that the article treats with a company that would have received contracts from state enterprises PSAEL, EFCL, to the tune of some $15 million, Mr. Speaker, allegedly, between 2013 to 2018. It also speaks, Mr. Speaker, of this company receiving handsome contracts as well. In one instance, it would have bid for a contract where another bidder would have been Rentokil. Rentokil, which has considerable experience, Mr. Speaker, for what was being required, would have lost out despite the fact that they would have had one of the lowest bids, and the company that is spoken about in this article would have received—would have bid the highest and was successful, Mr. Speaker, in procuring that contract.

Mr. Speaker, in the few minutes that I have left, I wish to mention, Mr.

Speaker—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. D. Romain: All right. In respect of, Mr. Speaker, the issue that was raised by the Member for Couva South concerning the Nutrimix contract, it is my information, and the Member for Arouca/Lopinot would have spoken to that on the last occasion that it was raised in a press conference where he mentioned that Nutrimix would have undertaken the capital costs related to that particular matter. Also, too, the Integrity Commission would have investigated that matter and it reads here, and we have a letter from the Integrity Commission sent to one Mr. Devant Maharaj:

"Investigation into alleged breaches of—"

6.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Member, your half-hour is up.

Mr. Scotland SC: Ask for your 15 minutes.

Mr. D. Romain: I am entitled to 15 minutes, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Well, ordinarily you would have been, so let me read what the Standing Order actually says.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Let me read what the Standing Order actually says:

"Time Limit on Speeches"

—this is not for the benefit of Members of the House. This is for the benefit of the public.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: "A Member may speak for the periods as specified below–

Motions	
Mover	45 minutes
Any other Member	30 minutes
Mover in reply	30 minutes

Other than the mover, if the Member speaking so requests"

—and these are the operative words—

"during or immediately upon the expiry of a speech, the time for the speech may be extended by the House…"

Hon. Member: You asked him that?

Mr. Speaker:—"…for a further 15 minutes."

No, you see, and specifically I did that because I ordinarily do so, but when Members get carried away by the moment and wish to "ramajay", it is not my duty to remind Members, you know.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: Let me make it quite clear. It is not my duty to remind Members. All Members know the Standing Orders. It is not my duty to remind you.

Hon. Member: Wow, wow!

Mr. Speaker: So, Oropouche East.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, thank you for identifying—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Gonzales: Mr. Speaker, point of order, point of order.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—as I begin my contribution and Motion before us—

Mr. Speaker: Oropouche East, there is a point of order.

Mr. Gonzales: Mr. Speaker, point of order please. Mr. Speaker, the Standing Order requires that on Private Member's day, Private Member's proceedings come to an end at 6.00 p.m.

Hon Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Gonzales: We are more than willing to debate the matter, but on Private Member's day, the proceedings come to an end at 6.00 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: All right. Here is what the Standing Order actually says:

"A Minister may move"—

Hon. Members: [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Can I have some silence please?

"A Minister may…"

—and it says:

"15. Adjournment of the House"

—under the rubric Adjournment of the House.

"(1) A Minister may move 'That this House do now adjourn' at any time after the conclusion of Questions to Ministers at any sitting."

Okay. So, ordinarily the rule applies at any sitting, a Minister may move that the House adjourn at any time after Questions to Ministers.

"However, on Private Member's day, except with the agreement of the Whips representing each of the parties in Opposition to the Government, the House shall not be adjourned earlier than 6.00 p.m."

So it does not mean that the House automatically adjourns at 6.00 p.m. There is no

provision in the Standing Order to that effect.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk and desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: So, Dr. Moonilal, Oropouche East.

Mr. Manning: So, Mr. Speaker, then why can the Member not extend his speaking time then?

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Without further interruption, I would like to—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, without further interruption, may I?

Mr. Speaker: Have a seat.

Mr. Manning: [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker: Have a seat.

Mr. Manning: You have been asking everyone except him.

Mr. Speaker: Have a seat. Everyone I did the favour of. It is not—San Fernando East? It is not my duty to mollycoddle Members insofar as their timekeeping is concerned. I have reminded everyone. It is not—

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, he must find it strange—

Mr. Speaker: Have a seat. I am standing.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: No, I reminded Diego Martin North/East. I reminded Arouca/Lopinot. It is not my duty to mollycoddle anyone and you are taking up the time. Oropouche East.

Mr. Gonzales: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I am still—

Mr. Gonzales: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I am still making my introductory remarks.

Mr. Gonzales: Mr. Speaker, I have a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: All right. What is your point?

Mr. Gonzales: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Malabar/Mausica was not given the opportunity to say whether his contribution would have been extended by 15 minutes.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: He sat down.

Mr. Gonzales: He was not given the opportunity, Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Members: [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: I have dealt with that. Have a seat.

Mr. Gonzales:—and it is unfair.

Mr. Speaker: No, it is not unfair. I have reminded every single person. Members have a duty to self-audit their time. Every single person. Oropouche East.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: So, Mr. Speaker, I ask the question—

Mr. Manning: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, please. Does that mean you will not—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: "Mr. Speaker, I asked San Fernando East, please, give meh ah chance, nah?"

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: "Oh God! Give meh ah chance, man."

Mr. Speaker: Have a seat.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Hello.

Mr. Speaker: Have a seat.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Hello.

Mr. Speaker: That does not arise. Oropouche East.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: "Hello, this is not Richie on Cipero Street, eh."

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Listen. Mr. Speaker, I ask myself the question. How did this ugly Motion rear its head in this Parliament?

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And, Mr. Speaker, I am today fed up. I am fed up of this Opposition—

Mr. Marcelle: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, please.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—raising issues of governance when they have no moral authority to do so.

Mr. Marcelle: I rise on a Standing Order.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: You are bothering me now?

Mr. Marcelle: I rise on a Standing Order. If I may be allowed to rise, Sir. I rise on a Standing Order 15, please, Mr. Speaker. Where it says:

> The—"...Minister may move 'That this House do now adjourn' at any time after the conclusion of Questions to Ministers at any sitting. However, on Private Member's day, except with the agreement of the Whips representing each of the parties in Opposition to the Government, the House shall not be adjourned earlier than 6.00 p.m."

Ms. Ameen: That is what he just read.

Mr. Marcelle: There has been—if I may, in light of same, please, Mr. Speaker, there has been no agreement between the whole—

Ms. Ameen: [*Interruption*]

Mr. Marcelle: There has been—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Speaker: All right, can you all allow the Member to make his point?

Mr. Manning: "Yuh not online, yuh know?"

Mr. Marcelle: Mr. Speaker, if I may ask in relation to the extension of the debate, in terms of when the debate will come to an end under this Standing Order, so that we can know if we have the opportunity to respond today or if it will be adjourned until the next date, please. I am just seeking a clarification.

Mr. Speaker: I have—Member, perhaps you were not understanding when I read the Standing Order, right. I see you had recourse to the lack of agreement. The lack of agreement only comes into play, so to speak, if there is a desire to adjourn before six o'clock. So, the lack of agreement does not feature in this regulatory equation if it is intended to go beyond 6.00.

Insofar as your enquiry of me is concerned as to when it would be adjourned, that is matter entirely for the majority of the House or the House together, acting together. As you well know, I do not have any control over that process.

Mr. Marcelle: You are in charge, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry?

Mr. Marcelle: You are in charge, Mr. Speaker. You are in charge.

Mr. Speaker: You know, on the street they would say, "I ain't taking that chain up". "I ain't taking that chain up" and I could turn around and you will not see "Made in Taiwan" on my back, all right? "So I am not taking dat chain up." Oropouche East.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hosein: Start over, start over.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, may I start over? If this continues, Members of the Opposition will have to assist me in editing my *Hansard* contribution, because they are speaking more than I am.

Mr. Elder: Yes.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: And I want a chance to indicate my displeasure with the filing of this Motion, with the contents of this Motion, and the fact that it rears its ugly head on a day like today, when Members opposite had nothing to say. Nothing to say about governance. Not one Minister of government in the conduct of his or her duty since April 2025. Today, no Member opposite brought one issue concerning the conduct of a government Minister in this administration of Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I have had to sit down here and witness this pervasive obsession with Cox—

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—from the Member for Arouca/Lopinot, he was obsessed with Cox. The Member for—what was his name again? O'Meara, Malabar, he

came, obsessed with Cox. And if the next one talks, they are obsessed with Cox too.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: What is it with them?

Ms. John: And Cox.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal:—and Keino Cox. That is the bulk of the debate. That is the bulk of the debate. That is what they came for.

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

Hon. Member: Cox, Cox, they came for Cox.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker. They filed a Motion for Cox.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: To deal with Keino Cox and that matter. That is what they did. Mr. Speaker, I just want to reply to the Member for—compose yourself, Barataria.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The Member for Malabar, O'Meara contribution.

Mr. Lee: Malabar/Mausica.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Malabar/Mausica. Mr. Speaker, the Member raised the issue of Petrotrin and I want to put it on record that the locus classicus, landmark to use that term, of the dismantling and undermining of a state enterprise and an economic sector is Petrotrin. That is the locus classicus.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: The PNM administration, and I have the documents in my hand. Mr. Speaker, they speak today about governance of the state sector. I am

not going to waste time reading the entire dysfunctional Motion, but the Motion speaks to

> "…strengthen transparency, accountability, competence, institutional independence…principles of corporate governance."

They entered a $26 billion loan arrangement without Cabinet approval. Allowed the Board and selected Ministers in the PNM administration to destroy the energy sector, the bedrock of the economic sector.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: They took loans without any approval, due diligence, for the GTL project, the gas optimization plant. They had absolutely no transparency, no good governance principles. In fact, the very Petrotrin Board under a PNM administration confirmed that this entire arrangement that destroyed Petrotrin, Mr. Speaker, this entire arrangement had absolutely no transparency, no project management principles were applied.

They went on a limb and promised the Board of Directors of Petrotrin to do due diligence on an international financial entity and they were conned. Under their former administrations, they were conned. That is what their governance is. Today we have to hear about transparency, about fairness. They used to appoint a Board member on Friday and fire him on Monday. That is what they did when they were there. I mean, I really do not want to get into people's family business and so on, but we all know of the family, the friends, the financiers and how it went.

Mr. Speaker, they told a former Commissioner of Police who had to get a gun licence for a partner in Tobago. The Prime Minister wrote the Commissioner

a text message and said, "I'm going up to Tobago, give meh it, I'll carry it for him". A gun licence.

Mr. Hosein: "To shoot pig, eh."

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: "Yeah, it was to shoot, well—do talk about that too much, Barataria." Yeah, to shoot animals. So, Mr. Speaker, that is their track record of governance.

Governance, I have said before, the Privy Council has ruled in several landmark cases about the misconduct of the administration of the PNM in terms of the rights of citizens in employment, their constitutional rights outside of being a public servant, and that is on public record. So, Mr. Speaker, today, look—Mr. Speaker, this is a Motion that cannot, cannot be carried by this House under no circumstances.

We hear about Nelson, what—Vincent?

Mr. Hosein: Vincent Nelson.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Vincent Nelson, that is a clear-cut matter. It is on public record that the former administration involving the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, and the former Member for San Fernando West, they told Vincent Nelson, "Look, we have money for you". "We owe you money, but listen, you will get $10 million to start with if you do certain things. If you do certain affidavits and statements against former officials of a UNC administration." It is on public record, Vincent Nelson said that himself and they have never, ever denied that.

The Member for Port of Spain, North/St. Ann's West, sat on an aircraft to and from London with Vincent Nelson and told him, "Rest assured, rest assured,

we will deal with that money we owe you. You just keep focused. Get that evidence against Ramdeen and Ramlogan" and whatever Ram again it had. And the other Ram you talk about, Arnold Ram. The matter was in the High Court in July 2026, and the High Court ruled in favour of Arnold Ram, and it went back to the Industrial Court. The matter is pending over the business involving TSTT and so on.

Again, that is public record. I expected someone who said he was a public prosecutor on radio—

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: I thought the public prosecutor on radio would have checked the files in July 2026; he would have checked out the data, but he did not. And the Member for Couva South would have the information on that. Mr. Speaker, I am much too angry. Anyway, I see the Member for Couva South, the Chief Whip, is—

Mr. Padarath: Reserve your rights.

Hon. Dr. R. Moonilal: Mr. Speaker, I reserve my right to continue this contribution on another occasion, but the Member for Couva South is getting my attention.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Public Utilities and Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister (Hon. Barry Padarath): Thank you most kindly, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to a date to be fixed and, as the Member for Oropouche East has indicated, on the next occasion that we continue with this debate, the Member for Oropouche East will continue as a

government speaker.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk and laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: Port of Spain South, can I assure you I will avail myself of my time to give you a tutorial in case you need it. Hon. Members, the question is that this House do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.

Question put.

Mr. Gonzales: No, no, no.

Mr. Padarath: Division.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk, laughter and desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker: All right, let us take a division on the adjournment. All right, except to say, if the call for the division is less than facetious, except to say the Standing Orders do not provide for discretion of the adjournment, the question being put on the adjournment, right?

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Gonzales: No, we want to talk.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk, laughter and desk thumping*]

Mr. Padarath: "Deh aint tired get licks today?"

Mr. Speaker: Take care—

Mr. Padarath: "Dey want more licks, more licks, more licks."

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk and laughter*]

Mr. Speaker: You know, Arouca/Lopinot, there are two sayings, right? "Careful when yuh bluff." There are two sayings. "When crapaud dead, dey does cross road. And what is joke for school children is death for crapaud."

Question agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.16 p.m.